

ADVENT

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When the mind is pure and psychic prominent, then one feels what is according to the Divine will and what is against it.

SRI AUROBINDO

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If you are truly surrendered to the Divine, in the right manner and totally, then at every moment you will be what you ought to be, you will do what you ought to do, you will know what you ought to know.

But for that you should have transcended all the limitations of the ego.

THE MOTHER



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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS

RECORD OF WORLD-HISTORY

ALL that has happened upon earth, everything from the beginning of creation till now, everything without exception have been recorded somewhere in some particular world or region of consciousness. All that man has thought, his researches and discoveries, his findings and conclusions are kept intact, carefully stored. If you want to know anything of the past history of the earth, the happening at a particular time and place, you have simply to transplant yourself into that world and look into the records.

It is a very curious place, something like a vast library. It consists of an infinite number of cells, as it were, each containing all information on a particular subject. They seem to be squares in shape and they remain closed normally. If you have to consult a particular square, you press a button and it opens and out of it comes a roll of written matter. You unroll it and find out what you want. There are millions and millions and millions of these

cells and rolls, around, above, everywhere. Fortunately in the mental world you can move anywhere as you like, you do not require lifts and ladders to get up.

The point, however, is how to go there at all. Well, the first thing is that you must completely silence your mind. Mental cogitations, agitations you must leave behind, no thoughts must enter your consciousness, it must be tranquil and still, like a transparent sheet of water or smooth and polished like a mirror. The description I have given of a library is only an image, the real thing is something different. However, you have in this way some idea to go upon. In the silent mind you form a point of consciousness and send it out as an emissary to gather the required information. This point of consciousness must be absolutely detached and free to go as it likes; for if it were in any way kept tied to the normal movements of your own mind, then you will not go further than what is in your head. You must be able to make your brain a blank, you must have no preconceived notion, no idea that the solution of your problem might lie in this way or that. As I say, your mind has to be a thoroughly blank page, a clean slate, with nothing written on it, no mark even. There should be instead a sincere aspiration to know the truth, without postulating beforehand what kind of truth it might be; otherwise you will meet your own formation in the brain.

You can certainly test and correct the information you get from your inner voyage by outside information, what others have found or what are recorded in books. The inner knowledge need not and should not replace the outer knowledge, but supplement it, both should support and complete each other. But there is a mixture about which you must be very careful. Your silent mind, your inner consciousness receives the necessary knowledge, but as you want to express it or translate in normal terms, that is to say, as your brain gets active again, it may and often does supply its own materials and formations and the original knowledge gets disturbed and distorted. Sometimes what you may do is to dictate most passively the things you see or perceive and let another take down in writing as you proceed. You must say exactly as you see and the other write down exactly as he hears.

It is the image of reading a book that I have given you. But it is, as I said, only an image. What it is really is a kind of perception. And the perception may be in the form of an image, it may be in the form of a narrative. At other times it may be a simple answer to a particular question. There are many kinds and varieties of record, differing according to the types or levels of consciousness that you go to.

EDITORIALS

Naturally the process is not easy and available to everybody, as an ordinary book. It requires a special aptitude and a special discipline.

FREEDOM AND DESTINY

From a certain point of view whatever happens here in the material world is a reproduction or realisation of whatever has already happened or existed on another level of reality. In this world then there would be no free choice, everything being predetermined. From another standpoint, however, one can say with equal truth that the world here is being recreated every moment; it is not a mere replay or flash-back of a past event, a pre-existent phenomenon, but something ever new and fresh. Take, for an example, a material body, of a particular chemical composition, having some well-defined properties; it behaves according to that nature and produces inevitably results deducible from it. Now, if a new element is introduced into the thing at any moment, the whole quality of the composition and its behaviour will change. Something like that happens in the universe.

The universe is a huge mass of innumerable elements forming a certain composition and in accordance with this composition all are organised within itself. But such an arrangement is not the end or the culmination; it is not static, but moving forward; it is in the process of development. For at any moment, through the action of a different kind, one or more new elements can be introduced into the total mass that forms the universe at a given time and that will necessarily change the whole inner composition. The universe, the material universe, I mean, is a concretisation of a certain aspect or emanation of the Supreme. This concretisation is progressive, not necessarily in a constant and regular way, but in answer to a law, with a subtle kind or degree of liberty. Thus, in the composition of the universe at a moment new elements penetrate and alter the organisation. The organisation that was perfect in itself and moved and unrolled itself according to a definite plan and pattern, suddenly finds itself changed and the inner relations too are modified and attain a different poise. That may give the impression of something incoherent or imprecise or miraculous, according to the manner in which one looks at the problem. So there are these two simultaneous facts or factors: there is a determinism which is absolute in its way with a complementary movement of liberty, the unforeseen addition into a fixed existing sum.

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This addition comes from the aspiration of the supreme consciousness. There is nothing to wonder at the phenomenon. There is an aspiration acting in the world, moving with a certain end in view; the purpose is to bring back the fallen and obscured consciousness to its original and normal state of the divine consciousness. Each time that this aspiring consciousness meets an obstacle in its working, a new resistance to conquer or to transform, it calls for a new Force. And this new Force is a kind of new creation. In the human being too there are different domains in obedience to a law of correspondence; in each there is for him a different destiny and each is absolute in its line. But there is also in him, through his aspiration, a capacity to enter into relation with a domain higher than where he happens to be and bring down an action of this higher domain into the lower determinism. So we can say that there is a horizontal determinism in each domain, absolute in its normal working; but there is also a vertical intervention from other higher domains or even from the highest and then the lower determinism is changed completely. Thus every human being is at once a sum of various determinisms, absolute in their way, and there is also an absolute liberty that can intervene by bringing down other forces into the apparently rigid frame of destiny of the lower worlds and alter it. That is how things in the world give the impression of the unforeseen, the incalculable, the miraculous.

You may call this intervention Grace; for without the Divine Grace this could not happen. There is a consciousness and a vision of things where all are brought back to this single source; Grace only exists, nothing else is there. That does every thing. But as you have not risen to that summit, had not that extreme realisation, you have to take into account your own person, your personal aspiration, the thing that calls for the Grace and to which the Grace responds. The two are needed here. Both are ultimately ways of viewing the same truth. The mind, however, finds it difficult to conceive both in a simultaneous movement. The rigid distinctions it makes takes away much from the supple and subtle and integral truth of a total experience.

MYSTICISM AND OCCULTISM

Mysticism is more or less an emotional relation with what one feels to be a Divine Power—it is a relation very intimate, emotive and intense with something invisible which one takes for the Divine.

Occultism is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science, altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry or physics; for occult knowledge is very much like scientific knowledge, only science deals with material objects and forces, while occultism deals with invisible entities and energies, their potentials of combination and association. And as by your chemical or physical knowledge you control material phenomena, in the same way by the occult knowledge you control subtle phenomena, make them active and effective. The procedure also is quite scientific. It is to be learnt exactly as you do a science. It is not a matter of feeling or emotion: it is nothing vague or uncertain. You must work as in a laboratory. You have to learn the laws of action and reaction and apply them. Only there are not many people to teach you. Also it is not without danger. There are in this field combinations as explosive as any chemical combination.

It is a thing, however, that can be learnt. But one must have the aptitude. If you have the power latent in you, you can develop it by practice; but if you have not, you can try for 50 years, it will come to nothing. Everybody cannot have the occult power; it is as if you said that everybody in the world could be a musician or a painter or a poet. There are people who can and there are those who cannot. Usually, if you are interested in the subject, unless it is a mere idle curiosity, it is a sign that you have the gift. You can then try. But, as I say, it is to be done with great precaution.

Thus, for example, when one goes out of the body—I have often spoken to you of this phenomenon—even if it be just to a little extent, even if only mentally—then what goes out is a part of the consciousness that controls the normal activities of the body, what remains is the portion that is automatic, producing the spontaneous involuntary movements such as blood circulation or secretion etc.; also other nervous or automatic thought movements; this region is no longer under the control of the conscious thinking part. Now, there is always in the atmosphere around you a good number of small entities, quite small often, that are generally formed out of the disintegrated remains of a dead human being: they are like microbes, the microbes of the vital. They have forms and can be visible and they have a will of their own. You may not say they are always wicked, but they are full of mischief, that is to say, they like amusing themselves at the cost of human beings. As soon as they see that someone is not sufficiently protected, they rush in and take possession of the automatic mentality and bring about all kinds of disagreeable happenings—nightmares, various physical disturbances—you feel

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choked, bite or swallow your tongue and even more serious things. When you wish to go into trance, to have the experience of being outside the body, you must have someone by your side, not only to keep watch on your physical body, but also to prevent the vital entities from getting possession of the nerve centres which, as I said, are no longer under the control and protection of the conscious intelligence. There is a still greater danger. When one goes out of the body in a more or less concrete or material way, retaining only a thin and fragile contact—a thread of light, as it were—with the body, this thread of contact must be protected, for the attack of the hostiles may come upon it and cut it; if it is cut one can no longer return into the body, and that means death.

All that signifies that occultism is not a joke or a mere play; you cannot take to it simply to amuse yourself. It must be done as it ought to be done, under proper conditions and with great care. The one thing absolutely essential is, I repeat once more, to be totally fearless. If you happen to meet in your dreams terrible scenes and are frightened, then you must not approach occultism. If, on the contrary, you can remain perfectly tranquil in the face of the most frightful menaces causing you only amusement, if you can handle such situations safely and successfully, that would show that you have some capacity and then you can try seriously. There are people who are real fighters in their sleep; if they meet an enemy they can face him, they can not only defend, but can attack and conquer.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

THE LINE OF RAGHU¹

(A FRAGMENT)

FOR mastery of word and sense I bow to the Pair close-wedded as word and sense, the parents of the world, the Mountain's child and the Mighty Lord. 1

Wide is the gulf between the race born of the Sun and a mind thus scantily stored! I am one that in his infatuation would cross in a raft the difficult ocean. 2

Dull of wit, yet aspiring to poetic glory I shall expose myself to mockery like a dwarf who in his greed lifts up his arms to a fruit meant only for the giant's grasp. 3

Yet into the story of this race a door of speech has been made by the inspired minds of old and through which I can enter as a thread can pass through a gem which the diamond's point has bored. 4

Therefore this tale of the Raghus, the kings pure from their birth, they who left not work till work's fruit appeared, they who were masters of earth to the ocean's bound and their chariot journeyed even to the heavens. 5

Ever according to the ordinance they offered to the sacrificial flames and honoured ever the suppliant with his whole desire, they meted the punishment of the guilty by his offence, they were wakeful to the hour. 6

They gathered riches only to give and spoke little that they might speak nought but truth and conquered only for glory and were householders only to prolong the race. 7

In childhood students of knowledge, in youth seekers after enjoyment, in old age pursuers of the sage's path and in their end left by Yoga their bodies,—8

The tale of their line I will tell though meagre my wealth of speech, for I am impelled to this rashness by their virtues that have touched my ear. 9

The wise should lend ear to it who are cause that good is discerned from bad, for it is by fire that the purity of gold is marked or else the *darkness of its alloy*². 10

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ A translation of the first ten verses from the *Raghuvamśa* of Kalidasa

² Or, *dullness of hue*

THE CONDITIONS OF ATTAINMENT TO THE GNOSIS¹

KNOWLEDGE is the first principle of the Vijnana, but knowledge is not its only power. The Truth-consciousness like every other plane, founds itself upon that particular principle which is naturally the key of all its motions; but it is not limited by it, it contains all the other powers of existence. Only the character and working of these other powers is modified and moulded into conformity with its own original and dominant law; intelligence, life, body, will, consciousness, bliss are all luminous, awake, instinct with divine knowledge. This is indeed the process of Purusha-Prakriti everywhere; it is the key-movement of all the hierarchy and graded harmonies of manifested existence.

In the mental being mind-sense or intelligence is the original and dominant principle. The mental being in the mind-world where he is native is in his central and determining nature intelligence; he is a centre of intelligence, a massed movement of intelligence, a receptive and radiating action of intelligence. He has the intelligent sense of his own existence, the intelligent sense of other existence than his own, the intelligent sense of his own nature and activities and the activities of others, the intelligent sense of the nature of things and persons and their relations with himself and each other. That makes up his experience of existence. He has no other knowledge of existence, no knowledge of life and matter except as they make themselves sensible to him and capable of being seized by his mental intelligence; what he does not sense and conceive, is to him practically non-existent, or at least alien to his world and his nature.

Man is in his principle a mental being, but not one living in a mind world, but in a dominantly physical existence; his is a mind encased in Matter and conditioned by Matter. Therefore he has to start with the action of the physical senses which are all channels of material contact; he does not start with the mind-sense. But even so he does not and cannot make free use of anything conveyed by these physical organs until and unless they are taken

¹ Chapter XXXV, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, revised by Sri Aurobindo

hold of by the mind-sense and turned into stuff and value of his intelligent being. What is in the lower subhuman submental world a pranic, a nervous, a dynamic action and reaction, that proceeds very well without any need of translation into mind-terms or governed by mind, has in him to be raised and offered to some kind of intelligence. In order to be characteristically human it has to become first a sense of force, sense of desire, sense of will, sense of intelligent will-action or mentally conscious sense of force-action. His lower delight of being translates itself into a sense of mental or mentalised vital or physical pleasure and its perversion pain, or into a mental or mentalised feeling-sensation of liking and disliking or into an intelligence of delight and failure of delight,—all phenomena of the intelligent mind-sense. So too that which is above him and that which is around him and in which he lives, —God, the universal being, the cosmic Forces,—are non-existent and unreal to him until his mind awakes to them and gets, not yet their true truth, but some idea, observation, inference, imagination of things supersensuous, some mental sense of the Infinite, some intelligent interpreting consciousness of the forces of the superself above and around him.

All changes when we pass from mind to gnosis; for there a direct inherent knowledge is the central principle. The gnostic (*viññānamaya*) being is in its character a truth-consciousness, a centre and circumference of the truth-vision of things, a massed movement or subtle body of gnosis. Its action is a self-fulfilling and radiating action of the truth-power of things according to the inner law of their deepest truest self and nature. This truth of things at which we must arrive before we can enter into the gnosis,—for in that all exists and from that all originates on the gnostic plane,—is, first of all, a truth of unity, of oneness, but of unity originating diversity, unity in multiplicity and still unity always, an indefeasible oneness. State of gnosis, the condition of *viññānamaya* being, is impossible without ample and close self-identification of ourselves with all existence and with all existences, a universal pervasiveness, a universal comprehension or containing, a certain all-in-allness.

The gnostic Purusha has normally the consciousness of itself as infinite, normally too the consciousness of containing the world in itself and exceeding it; it is not like the divided mental being normally bound to a consciousness that feels itself contained in the world and a part of it. It follows that a deliverance from the limiting and imprisoning ego is the first elementary step towards the being of the gnosis; for so long as we live in the ego, it is idle to hope for this higher reality, this vast self-consciousness, this true self-knowledge. The least reversion to ego-thought, ego-action, ego-will

brings back the consciousness tumbling out of such gnostic Truth as it has attained into the falsehoods of the divided mind-nature. A secure universality of being is the very basis of this luminous higher consciousness. Abandoning all rigid separateness (but getting instead a certain transcendent overlook or independence) we have to feel ourselves one with all things and beings, to identify ourselves with them, to become aware of them as ourselves, to feel their being as our own, to admit their consciousness as part of ours, to contact their energy as intimate to our energy, to learn how to be one self with all. That oneness is not indeed all that is needed, but it is a first condition and without it there is no gnosis.

This universality is impossible to achieve in its completeness so long as we continue to feel ourselves, as we now feel, a consciousness lodged in an individual mind, life and body. There has to be a certain elevation of the Purusha out of the physical and even out of the mental into the *vijñānamaya* body. No longer can the brain nor its corresponding mental "lotus" remain the centre of our thinking, no longer the heart nor its corresponding "lotus" the originating centre of our emotional and sensational being. The conscious centre of our being, our thought, our will and action, even the original force of our sensations and emotions rise out of the body and mind take a free station above them. No longer have we the sensation of living in the body, but are above it as its lord, possessor or Ishwara and at the same time encompass it with a wider consciousness than that of the imprisoned physical sense. Now we come to realise with a very living force of reality, normal and continuous, what the sages meant when they spoke of the soul carrying the body or when they said that the soul is not in the body, but the body in the soul. It is from above the body and not from the brain that we shall ideate and will; the brain-action will become only a response and movement of the physical machinery to the shock of the thought-force and will-force from above. All will be originated from above; from above, all that corresponds in gnosis to our present mental activity takes place. Many, if not all, of these conditions of the gnostic change can and indeed have to be attained long before we reach the gnosis,—but imperfectly at first as if by a reflection,—in higher mind itself and more completely in what we may call an overmind consciousness between mentality and gnosis.

But this centre and this action are free, not bound, not dependent on the physical machine, not clamped to a narrow ego-sense. It is not involved in body; it is not shut up in a separated individuality feeling out for clumsy contacts with the world out or groping inward for its own deeper spirit.

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For in this great transformation we begin to have a consciousness not shut up in a generating box but diffused freely and extending self-existently everywhere; there is or may be a centre, but it is a convenience for individual action, not rigid, not constitutive or separative. The very nature of our conscious activities is henceforth universal; one with those of the universal being, it proceeds from universality to a supple and variable individualisation. It has become the awareness of an infinite being who acts always universally though with emphasis on an individual formation of its energies. But this emphasis is differential rather than separative, and this formation is no longer what we now understand by individuality; there is no longer a petty limited constructed person shut up in the formula of his own mechanism. This state of consciousness is so abnormal to our present mode of being that to the rational man who does not possess it it may seem impossible or even a state of alienation; but once possessed it vindicates itself even to the mental intelligence by its greater calm, freedom, light, power, effectivity of will, verifiable truth of ideation and feeling. For this condition begins already on the higher levels of liberated mind and can therefore be partly sensed and understood by mind-intelligence only when it leaves behind the mental levels, but it rises to perfect self-possession only in the supramental gnosis.

In this state of consciousness the infinite becomes to us the primal, the actual reality, the one thing immediately and sensibly true. It becomes impossible for us to think of or realise the finite apart from our fundamental sense of the infinite, in which alone the finite can live, can form itself, can have any reality or duration. So long as this finite mind and body are to our consciousness the first fact of our existence and the foundation of all our thinking, feeling and willing and so long as things finite are the normal reality from which we can rise occasionally, or even frequently, to an idea and sense of the infinite, we are still very far away from the gnosis. In the plane of the gnosis the infinite is at once our normal consciousness of being, its first fact, our sensible substance. It is very concretely to us there the foundation from which everything finite forms itself and its boundless incalculable forces are the origination of all our thought, will and delight. But this infinite is not only an infinite of pervasion or of extension in which everything forms and happens. Behind that immeasurable extension the gnostic consciousness is always aware of a spaceless inner infinite. It is through this double infinite that we shall arrive at the essential being of Sachchidananda, the highest self of our own being and the totality of our cosmic existence. There

is opened to us an illimitable existence which we feel as if it were an infinity above us to which we attempt to rise and an infinity around us into which we strive to dissolve our separate existence. Afterwards we widen into it and rise into it; we break out of the ego into its largeness and are that for ever. If this liberation is achieved, its power can take, if so we will, increasing possession of our lower being also until even our lowest and perversest activities are refashioned into the truth of the Vijnana.

This is the basis, this sense of the infinite and possession by the infinite, and only when it is achieved, can we progress towards some normality of the supramental ideation, perception, sense identity, awareness. For even the sense of the infinite is only a first foundation and much more has to be done before the consciousness can become dynamically gnostic. For the supramental knowledge is the play of a supreme light; there are many other lights, other levels of knowledge higher than human mind which can open in us and receive or reflect something of that effulgence even before we rise into the gnosis. But to command or wholly possess it we must first enter into and become the being of the supreme light, our consciousness must be transformed into that consciousness, its principle and power of self-awareness and all-awareness by identity must be the very stuff of our existence. For our means and ways of knowledge and action must necessarily be according to the nature of our consciousness and it is the consciousness that must radically change if we are to command and not only be occasionally visited by that higher power of knowledge that is not confined to a higher thought or the action of a sort of divine reason. It takes up all our present means of knowledge immensely extended, active and effective where they are now debarred, blind, infructuous, and turns them into a high and intense perceptive activity of the Vijnana. Thus it takes up our sense action and illumines it even in its ordinary field so that we get a true sense of things. But also it enables the mind-sense to have a direct perception of the inner as well as the outer phenomenon, to feel and receive or perceive, for instance, the thoughts, feelings, sensations, the nervous reactions of the object on which it is turned.¹ It uses the subtle senses as well as the physical and saves them from their errors. It gives us the knowledge, the experience of planes of existence other than the material to which our ordinary mentality is ignorantly attached and it enlarges the world for us. It transforms similarly the

¹ This power, says Patanjali, comes by '*Sanyama*' on an object. That is for the mentality, in the gnosis there is no need of *Sanyama*. For this kind of perception is the natural action of the Vijnana.

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sensations and gives them their full intensity as well as their full holding-power; for in our normal mentality the full intensity is impossible because the power to hold and sustain vibrations beyond a certain point is denied to it, mind and body would both break under the shock or the prolonged strain. It takes up too the element of knowledge in our feelings and emotions,—for our feelings too contain a power of knowledge and a power of effectuation which we do not recognise and do not properly develop,—and delivers them at the same time from their limitations and from their errors and perversions. For in all things the gnosia is the Truth, the Right, the highest Law, *devānām adabdhāni vratāni*.

Knowledge and Force or Will—for all conscious force is will—are the twin sides of the action of consciousness. In our mentality they are divided. The idea comes first, the will comes stumbling after it or rebels against it or is used as its imperfect tool with imperfect results; or else the will starts up first with a blind or half-seeing idea in it and works out something in confusion of which we get the right understanding afterwards. There is no oneness, no full understanding between these powers in us; or else there is no perfect correspondence of initiation with effectuation. Nor is the individual will in harmony with the universal; it tries to reach beyond it or falls short of it or deviates from and strives against it. It knows not the times and seasons of the Truth, nor its degrees and measures. The Vijnana takes up the will and puts it first into harmony and then into oneness with the truth of the supramental knowledge. In this knowledge the idea in the individual is one with the idea in the universal, because both are brought back to the truth of the supreme Knowledge and the transcendent Will. The gnosia takes up not only our intelligent will, but our wishes, desires, even what we call the lower desires, the instincts, the impulses, the reachings out of sense and sensation and it transforms them. They cease to be wishes and desires, because they cease first to be personal and then cease to be that struggling after the ungrasped which we mean by craving and desire. No longer blind or half-blind reachings out of the instinctive or intelligent mentality, they are transformed into a various action of the Truth-will; and that will acts with an inherent knowledge of the right measures of its decreed action and therefore with an effectivity unknown to our mental willing. Therefore too in the action of the *vijnānamaya* will there is no place for sin; for all sin is an error of the will, a desire and act of the Ignorance.

When desire ceases entirely, grief and all inner suffering also cease. The

Vijnana takes up not only our parts of knowledge and will, but our parts of affection and delight and changes them into action of the divine Ananda. For if knowledge and force are the twin sides or powers of the action of consciousness, delight, Ananda—which is something higher than what we call pleasure—is the very stuff of consciousness and the natural result of the interaction of knowledge and will, force and self-awareness. Both pleasure and pain, both joy and grief are deformations caused by the disturbance of harmony between our consciousness and the force it applies, between our knowledge and will, a breaking up of their oneness by a descent to a lower plane in which they are limited, divided in themselves, restrained from their full and proper action, at odds with other-force, other-consciousness, other-knowledge, other-will. The Vijnana sets this to rights by the power of its truth and a wholesale restoration to oneness and harmony, to the Right and the highest Law. It takes up all our emotions and turns them into various form of love and delight, even our hatreds, repulsions, causes of suffering. It finds out or reveals the meaning they missed and by missing it became the perversions they are; it restores our whole nature to the eternal Good. It deals similarly with our perceptions and sensations and reveals all the delight that they seek, but in its truth, not in any perversion and wrong seeking and wrong reception; it teaches even our lower impulses to lay hold on the Divine and Infinite in the appearances after which they run. All this is done not in the values of the lower being, but by a lifting up of the mental, vital, material into the inalienable purity, the natural intensity, the continual ecstasy, one yet manifold, of the divine Ananda.

Thus the being of Vijnana is in all its activities a play of perfected knowledge-power, will-power, delight-power, raised to a higher than the mental, vital and bodily level. All-pervasive, universalised, freed from egoistic personality and individuality, it is the play of a higher Self, a higher consciousness and therefore a higher force and higher delight of being. All that acts in the Vijnana in the purity, in the right, in the truth of the superior or divine Prakriti. Its powers may often seem to be what are called in ordinary Yogic parlance siddhis, by the Europeans occult powers, shunned and dreaded by devotees and by many Yogins as snares, stumbling blocks, diversions from the true seeking after the Divine. But they have that character and are dangerous here because they are sought in the lower being, abnormally, by the ego for an egoistic satisfaction. In the Vijnana they are neither occult nor siddhis, but the open, unforced and normal

THE CONDITIONS OF ATTAINMENT TO THE GNOSIS

play of its nature. The Vijnana is the Truth-power and Truth-action of the divine Being in its divine identities, and, when this acts through the individual lifted to the gnostic plane, it fulfils itself unperverted, without fault or egoistic reaction, without diversion from the possession of the Divine. There the individual is no longer the ego, but the free Jiva domiciled in the higher divine nature of which he is a portion, *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*, the nature of the supreme and universal Self seen indeed in the play of multiple individuality but without the veil of ignorance, with self-knowledge, in its multiple oneness, in the truth of its divine Shakti.

In the Vijnana the right relation and action of Purusha and Prakriti are found, because there they become unified and the Divine is no longer veiled in Maya. All is his action. The Jiva no longer says "I think, I act, I desire, I feel"; he does not even say like the sadhaka striving after unity but before he has reached it, "As appointed by Thee seated in my heart, I act". For the heart, the centre of the mental consciousness is no longer the centre of origination but only a blissful channel. He is rather aware of the Divine seated above, lord of all, *adhiṣṭhita*, as well as acting within him. And seated himself in that higher being, *parārdhe*, *paramasyām parāvati*, he can say truly and boldly, "God himself by his Prakriti knows, acts, loves, takes delight through my individuality and its figures and fulfils there in its higher and divine measures the multiple *līlā* which the Infinite for ever plays in the universality which is himself for ever."

SRI AUROBINDO

EAST-WEST SYNTHESIS IN SRI AUROBINDO

FOR a comparative appraisal of the cultures of the East and West the concept of "man" is most appropriate, since 'man' is always central or basic to every civilisation and system of life. And it must be so, because all civilisations are man's creation and meant to afford satisfaction to him. However in some it is directly so, as in the eastern cultures generally, where man is avowedly the main interest; and in some indirectly, as, for example, in the modern western culture, where the chief interest has been external nature and a technological reconstruction and organisation of life. But the West has lately developed a new science, the science of Psychology, which has evoked much popular interest in human personality and its management. This new science might prove to be a most natural bridge between the East and the West. The concept of man is also capable of throwing an interesting reconciling light on these different cultures of the East and the West. If we take 'man' integrally, as an organisation of body, life, mind and soul and seek for him the fullest possible satisfaction through the development of them all, then we find that each one of the cultures of the East and the West answers in a special measure to some particular aspect of human personality and thus makes a contribution to the growth of an integral culture of the integral man.

The concept of man is indeed a most happy approach to the subject of cultural rapprochement and synthesis. However, in pursuing such rapprochement we must primarily aim at truth and an integral cultural advancement. A comparative appraisal and assessment of different cultural attainments must be maintained as a secondary strain intended to help the achievement of the fuller and the larger truth on the whole. The attitude of self justification and pride will evidently be a serious handicap in the way of further progress for the culture concerned as also its rapprochement with others.

It is usually the spirit of self-justification and pride or unprogressiveness combined with a partial concept of human personality and its possibilities that creates the gulf between man and man. A seeking for the most comprehensive and highest cultural life will by itself create a desire to learn

and profit from the cultural gain of others. If we consider cultures in this large-minded way, we will find that the modern West has made a unique kind of cultural advancement, which is a permanent human value. Its discovery of science, technology and methods of organisation have helped to raise the general standard of life in mankind. The East has more specifically sought a cultivation of the Spirit, an inner enrichment of consciousness through contemplation and meditation. And the Greeks had sought with intensity and dedication the ideal of truth, beauty and goodness.

If we relate these cultural pursuits to the different parts or aspects of human personality, that of body, life, mind and the spirit, the four principal parts, we will find that the modern western culture has primarily sought to raise the standard of our 'life' and 'body' parts. It has struggled to evolve methods for a better satisfaction of our wants and raising the general norm of living. The Greeks had sought an intensive culture of the mind and its pursuits of truth, beauty and goodness. The East has above all sought the splendours of the spirit, but this it has done, at least in the more recent centuries, in an exclusive sort of way, which regarded the other parts of personality with disrespect and derision. The Spirit in truth is the most comprehensive fact of personality, it includes the rest, it does not reject them. The character of the spiritual experience, which is not limited by unnecessary preconceptions, is a complete evidence of its comprehensiveness.

Thus considered these different cultures appear to have made essential contributions to the growth and enrichment of the integral culture of man and, therefore, they are evidently complementary in character. But obviously our conception of man should be truly integral and our will for an integral culture too clear and full. Then alone can we see how human history has even unconsciously worked for a common advancement of man and how each cultural adventure has been a real contribution. The philosophies of education are always intimately connected with the basic concept of man and if the different cultures, which have grown up on distinctive concepts of man, have been valuable contributions, then the different philosophies of education too, showing how the related aspects of personality can be developed, will constitute distinct contributions, and they could be availed of for the growth of an integral education of the integral man.

Cultural rapprochement of East and West and attempts at a World Philosophy are most significant developments of the recent times. They

unmistakably show the world's conscious and unconscious desire to achieve unity in its life and working. Fortunately for these attempts, we have in Sri Aurobindo a personality, whose primary issue of life was a real and original creation of an integral culture of man. Romain Rolland, the well-known savant, had truly characterised him as "the most complete synthesis achieved upto the present between the genius of the West and of the East." His life's aspiration, thought and the intensive cultural work he carried on were all related to the subject of human culture and world peace. And by natural disposition and training he had been, as it were, specially prepared for this task. He spent his early formative years in England and received the best western education. And he had, besides, a strong instinct for spiritual life. Western education, spirit of free inquiry and spiritual perception set the stage for his life's work and he truly succeeded in giving to the present-day world what it most needs and seeks. We have in his writings a most revealing picture of life, which proceeds from an original cultural motive of its own, but perhaps by reason of the comprehensiveness of the motive, it seems to take up within its wide compass the different cultural seekings and attainments and gives them a larger and a fuller orientation. This motive is referred to above as the fullest perfectibility of the integral man. In fact, this motive led him to the exploration of the superconscious or the higher spiritual ranges of personality, because the discipline, training and the mastery of the conscious and the subconscious give at best a limited power and development. It is through the progressive growth of the spiritual ranges of our experience that our body, life, and mind receive yet higher organisation and orientation, giving them new powers of dealing with their problems.

Sri Aurobindo called the spirituality, which rejected life and the world, partial and untrue to its character. The world is, in fact, an evolving expression of a spiritual Reality and, therefore, obviously a wide opportunity for the realisation and enjoyment of spiritual values. Spirituality can then be no introverted living, as it sometimes tends to become. It is however a life lived from within, lived from inner inspiration, guidance and government rather than under the pressure of external necessities.

Thus contemplation and work are not contradictory. They are complementary to each other for their full development. So are all external organisation, technology, and scientific research a necessary objective correlate to subjective experience. Properly oriented they will fulfil mutually, taken by themselves they become false and misleading. Western science

through its abstraction from the wholeness of spiritual experience has landed mankind in a situation, where divisions and distinctions created by the analytical reason cry for a harmonisation. And a spirituality abstracted from the objective social and material realities had led to a sorry state of general life in the East. An integral conception of human personality and its well-being will obviously give the best flowering of life and culture as a whole.

It was the same abstracted spirituality that had conceived of Reality as a static fact. The integral Reality is essentially a dynamic force, guiding and governing an evolving world, a world that is progressively bringing into realisation higher and higher qualities of consciousness. Individuality too is an essential spiritual value. Through inner spiritual living man ceases to be a plaything of circumstances. He becomes truly himself. However this selfhood and individuality are not of the ego, which is continually struggling against a non-ego; it is of the soul, which knows itself as an integral part of the whole world and contributing to its common purposes.

That indicates the way to our much-vexed question of world peace too. On the basis of the ego as our selfhood, whether individual or national, it is but natural that we should find a non-ego set against us, evoking in us fear, anxiety, suspicion and aggression. The unities that we thus achieve will rest upon these emotions and will, therefore, be shaky structures. It is only when the selfhood of soul, which knows itself as an integral part of the whole world and which sees and enjoys its own unity with the rest, becomes a dynamic ideal before the world that our seeking for world peace will get its proper footing.

Sri Aurobindo's thought is a most natural and original synthesis of the principal inspirations and trends of the cultures of the East and the West. It shows them their limitations as also the way of their integral progress and fulfilment. And in seeing these, their limitations and integral fulfilment, they can easily recognise themselves as co-workers in a common cause of general human growth and enrichment.

INDRA SEN

SRI AUROBINDO'S POETRY¹

MYSTIC, philosopher, seer, and sage, Sri Aurobindo has been the subject of many books and monographs. Scores of persons hold him in high regard—on this side idolatory. He has soared to heights and delved to depths far beyond the reach and ken of the ordinary man. What we tend to forget, in the blaze of his divine philosophy, is that he had himself said once that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, and only later became a Yogi. In his "Biographia Literaria", Coleridge observes that no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. Dr. Cousins speaks of Sri Aurobindo as the philosopher as poet. In this paper the literary rather than the philosophic aspect of his poetry is to be touched on, partly because Sri Aurobindo's achievement as a literary artist is not sufficiently recognised, but mainly because I have no philosophy in me!

Aurobindo's literary career extended from 1890 to 1944.² During this long period there was hardly a time when his Muse was silent. And how prolific was her gift! As far as I have discovered, he wrote poetry neither in Sanskrit nor in Bengali,³ but only in English. Of English verse he has used many forms—the couplet, blank verse, the sonnet, the quatrain, and he has experimented also with quantitative verse. In each medium he has attained high technical skill. He has made admirable translations from Sanskrit and Bengali³ and has poems on themes based on European classical literature. Art is sometimes regarded as being very different from, if indeed not hostile to religion and morality. It gives pleasure and must therefore be suspect. Milton, the most serious and moral of English poets, used the phrase "simple, sensuous, and impassioned", in relation to poetry; and puritans condemn all that is impassioned and sensual. Sri Aurobindo's art is both sensual and impassioned, and in some rare instances, also simple. The Oxford Dictionary defines Art as "skill displaying itself in perfection

¹ Presidential address on the 83rd birthday of Sri Aurobindo, August 15, 1954 under the auspices of the Sri Aurobindo Study Centre, B. Naras.

² He was writing even before and after.—Ed.

³ He wrote in Sanskrit and in Bengali also.—Ed.

of workmanship, perfection of execution as an object in itself." Perhaps, according to this definition, Sri Aurobindo's work may not be regarded to be art, as there is hardly a poem of his which depends for its appeal on mere perfection of workmanship. One may question if this is true of any genuine work of art, of any piece of sculpture, any painting, a song, or a dance movement. Perfection of workmanship there must be, of course, but it must lead to a contraction in the heart, a sensation in the pit of the stomach, an exaltation, a sigh or a shout or a sob. A sunset-touch, a fancy from a flower-bell, a chorus-ending from Euripides—these are not merely enough for fifty hopes and fears, but also supply a sensation and an experience that remain our permanent possessions.

Sri Aurobindo was at one time deeply interested in politics. In 1902 he first came in contact with a group of revolutionaries, and a few years later started writing for "Yugantar". In 1908 he was arrested and lodged in Ali-pore Jail. On his release he started the two weeklies, "Karmayogin" and "Dharma". In 1910 he went from Chandernagore to Pondicherry, where he lived for the rest of his life. In 1914 he advised Motilal Roy to give up his revolutionary activities. In 1922, C. R. Das urged Sri Aurobindo to return to politics, but he refused, saying that he was after a higher reality and that if he should return, it would be after attaining a new poise which would help to give a fresh orientation to everything. He wrote to Baptista in 1920: "I do not look upon politics as inferior nor do I think that I have now outgrown them. I have always emphasised spiritual life and I am doing that much more fully now....What is now going on in the political field seems to differ much from what I would like to do. My sole object during 1903-10 was to create among the people a will to be free and to divert the energies of Congress from the useless ways that it was following into self-reliant and militant channels....I believe that India has a soul, has a genius of its own. I generally subscribe to principles of some kind of social democracy. But they should be in tune with the traditions and culture of India". This long extract has been quoted in order to express surprise that during the many years of poetic activity, even when he was deeply involved in political work, Sri Aurobindo did not write any poem of note either on contemporary political events or leaders or on the enemies of freedom. It almost appears as if he reserved for poetry a region where politics dared not soar, as if in poetry he sought to recapture a vision of the past that grows not old and to remember at the going down of the sun and in the mornings the stories and legends and myths of ancient India and ancient

Greece, as if familiar matter of today, pride, pomp, and circumstance¹ of the Boer War or the first World War, the flame of freedom in human souls, might be good enough in their own way, but not sublime enough or noble enough or rarefied enough for his poetic Muse. This may be considered to be a drawback. It may be argued that his poetry has chosen an artificially restricted region as its demesne, that it is not co-extensive with life. All this may be true; he may not have been cradled into poetry by wrong; and he may not simply tell the most heart-easing things. But we have to consider a man's work within the frame-work fixed by him, judge of his achievement in the light of what he sets forth to achieve. We shall do well to recognise that Sri Aurobindo has no place for politics or for contemporary happenings in his poetry. These were not ignored or forgotten, but figured prominently in his letters and in his journalistic work. The only poems that have a political tinge were written while he was still a student in England and do not concern India, but Ireland. Here is an epitaph on the tragic hero of Irish politics, Parnell:

“O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,
Who smot’st them with an edge surpassing swords!
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth.”

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Of quite a number of Aurobindo's poems, the theme is Love. He might almost have said with Herrick:

“Love is a circle that doth restless move
In the same sweet eternity of love”.

This is significant and curious, for one cannot discover that in the poet's life love had any considerable share—love for parents, for friends, for brother, or for wife. And yet some of his best pieces, both lyric and narrative, concern love, and Kalidasa's drama translated by him is also on this subject.

¹ There are some poems on contemporary circumstances.—Ed.

Love, Nature, and the World of the Mind and the Self—these govern his song and are their still recurring burthen. In one of his earliest poems are lines such as:

“O wondrous day,
That crowned the bliss of those delicious years.
The vernal radiance of my lover's lips
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,
His love around me than the summer air.”

And here is a rendering from Meleager, entitled, “A Rose of Women”:

“Now lilies blow upon the windy height,
Now flowers the pansy kissed by tender rain,
Narcissus builds his house of self-delight
And love's own fairest flower blooms again;
Vainly your gems, O meadows, you recall;
One simple girl breathes sweeter than you all.”

And this, “Radha's Complaint in Absence”, imitated from Chandidas:

“Friend of my soul, who then has called love sweet?
Laughing I called from heavenly spheres
The sweet love close; he came with flying feet
And turned my life to tears.”

and next, “Seasons.”:

“Day and night begin, you tell me,
When the Sun may choose to set or rise,
Well, it may be; but for me their changing
Is determined only by her eyes.
Summer, spring, the fruitless winter,
Hinge, you say, upon the heavenly sun?
Oh, but I have known a yearlong winter!
Spring was by her careless smiles begun.”

One can select many more pieces. It is sufficient to say, here is God's plenty. Perhaps the best passage with which to end this section is the following from

THE ADVENT

the poem entitled: "The Rishi". It is the advice of the Rishi of the Pole to king Manu:

"Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth
And joy receive
His good and evil, sin and virtue, till
He bids thee leave.
But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil
Thy part, conceive
Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,
The drama His.
Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,
Who only is.
Work, love, and know,—so shall thy spirit win
Immortal bliss.
Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O king,
Fear not to enjoy;
For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing
Fools to annoy.
From self escape and find in love alone
A higher joy."

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External nature, its sights and smells, its mildness and its grandeur, its energy and its unending variety, has inspired many of Aurobindo's poems. He does not treat it merely as an external scene, but as a vital part of the general scheme of the universe. He muses on nature with a poet's eye and with the ardour, the thrill of a lover. He listens to the voice of nature and finds in it much to elevate, to soothe, to instruct. It is not distant or apart, and certainly not red in tooth and claw.

EVENING

O golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
That bend down to their green companion
And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these

SRI AUROBINDO'S POETRY

And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—
Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.

THE OTHER EARTHS

An irised multitude of hills and seas,
And glint of brooks in the green wilderness,
And trackless stars, and mirrored symphonies
Of hues that float in ethers shadowless,
A dance of fire-flies in the fretted gloom,
In a pale midnight the moon's silver flare,
Fire-importunities of scarlet bloom
And bright suddenness of wings in a golden air,
Strange bird and animal forms like memories cast
On the rapt silence of unearthly woods,
Calm faces of the Gods on backgrounds vast
Bringing the marvel of the infinitudes,
Through glimmering veils of wonder and delight
World after world bursts on the awakened sight."

and finally, this from "Urvashie":

"Wast thou not a part
Of soft auspicious evenings I have loved?
Have I not seen thy beauty on the clouds?
In moonlight and in starlight and in fire?
Some flower whose brightness was a trouble? a face
Whose memory like a picture lived with me?
A thought I had, but lost? O was thy voice
A vernal repetition in some grove,
Telling of lilies clustered o'er with bees
And quiet waters open to the moon?"

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Lastly, there is the large mass of verse which is metaphysical. Aurobindo has said, "The touch of the Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we

can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical”. But, as early as 1905, he wrote to his wife Mrinalini: “The second madness that has recently taken hold of me is, happen what may, I must see God face to face, whatever the means.” Some sentences from his letter to Barindra written in 1920, may be quoted as giving an indication of what Aurobindo was striving to achieve:

“The path of Sannyas that preaches Nirvana or complete renunciation lays the greatest stress on looking upon the body as a corpse. I do not think that worldly activities can be carried on with such an attitude towards the body. One must be able to find Ananda in everything—in body as in spirit. The body is full of consciousness, it is a manifestation of God. If one sees Bhagwan in everything in this world, if one realises that ‘all this is Brahman, everything is Vasudeva’, one enjoys universal bliss. When one attains this poise, he can carry on worldly affairs, marry, and do all one’s duties with a spiritual attitude. One visualises then the joyful manifestation of Bhagwan in all actions. Since long, I have been trying to transform all my experiences and all the objects of the senses as well as of the mind into joy. All that stuff now is assuming the form of supramental joy. It is in this condition of the consciousness that man realises the full vision and experience of Sat-Chit-Ananda....For the firm establishment of my Yoga, I wish to have vast, heroic equanimity; when consciousness is founded on that equanimity, I would like to have full, firm, and immovable Shakti or power; in that ocean of power I want the spread of the rays of the sun of knowledge; in that vastness of light there should be infinite love, joy, and the ecstasy of unitive experience.”

This long passage gives to us some idea of what Sri Aurobindo desired to achieve and is a necessary prelude to an understanding of much of his philosophical and mystic verse. It is this underlying belief that inspires a stanza such as:

“We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.”

Or these lines:

“Alone
Who rises above fear and plays with grief,
Defeat and death, inherits full relief

From blindness and beholds the single form,
 Love masking Terror, Peace supporting storm.
 The Friend of Man helps him with Life and Death,
 Until he knows. Then freed from mortal breath
 He feels the joy of the immortal play;
 Grief, pain, resentment, terror pass away.
 He too grows Rudra, fierce, august and dire,
 And Shiva, sweet fulfiller of desire."

And so, on the seraph-wings of ecstasy, the poet rode and stood free in the spirits silence and passing on measureless wings beyond Time and life was still one with born and unborn things. That vision is enough. It is knowledge and wisdom. That mystic experience, realised not by chance or intuition, but by strenuous, conscious effort, is the theme of several of the sonnets written during his last years. "The Golden Light" may be quoted:

"Thy golden light came down into my brain
 And the grey worms of mind sun-touched became
 A bright reply to Wisdom's occult plane,
 A calm illumination and a flame,
 Thy golden Light came down into my throat,
 And all my speech is now a tune divine,
 A paean song of thee my single note;
 My words are drunk with the Immortal's wine.
 The golden Light came down into my heart
 Smiting my life with Thy eternity;
 Now has it grown a temple where Thou art
 And all its passions point towards only Thee.
 Thy golden Light came down into my feet
 My earth is now thy playfield and thy seat."

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The art of translation is difficult. Many have essayed it, but few have succeeded. It is specially difficult when the languages concerned are so distant from each other in diction, in tradition, in atmosphere, in the genius loci as Sanskrit and English. The difficulty is greater when poetry is to be translated into poetry. D. G. Rossetti says:

"The work of the translator (and with all humility be it spoken) is one of some self-denial. Often would he avail himself of any special grace of his own idiom and epoch, if only his will belonged to him; often would some cadence serve him but for his author's structure—some structure but for his author's cadence. Now he would slight the matter for the music, and now the music for the matter; but no, he must deal to each alike. Sometimes, too, a flaw in the work galls him and he would fain remove it, doing for the poet that which his age denied him; but no,—it is not in the bond." A recent scholar has summed up the requirements thus:

"Linguistic knowledge and literary capacity are essential for every kind of translation; but Insight is just as indispensable. Some would construe 'insight' as 'sympathy' with the author, or they would add 'sympathy' thereto. If this sympathy means the appreciation which insight and study have produced, we may agree. But many who use the word intend something more emotional, such as admiration, love, or esteem.... Translating is an exercise of the intellect; and sentiment has no place in its performance."

One may object to the last sentence in Professor Postgate's paragraph, for while fidelity to the form may be achieved by mere intellect, fidelity to the substance cannot be attained without a genuine feeling of liking for the original.

First, we shall take up Sri Aurobindo's rendering of Bhartrihari's "Niti shataka." The first edition, brought out in 1924, by Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya's Shama Publishing House, is described as "The Niti Shataka of Bhartrihari freely rendered into English verse." The word "translated" is avoided, very wisely; 'translation' is transference, from one medium to another. The translator enjoys no latitude save that which will make the translation idiomatic and natural in the language into which it is made. Sri Aurobindo uses the word 'rendered', for it enables him to reproduce the impression produced by the original. A free rendering can be read for pleasure, as literature. A translation is a mechanical exercise to be read for curiosity. In a prefatory note, Aurobindo says:

"I had at first entitled the translation "The Century of Morals", but the Sanskrit word Niti has a more complex sense. It includes also policy and worldly wisdom, the rule of successful as well as the law of ideal conduct and gives scope for observation of all the turns and forces determining the movement of human character and actions".

I shall quote a few verses to show how Aurobindo has managed to remain faithful to the original without sacrifice of elegance and naturalness.

(1)

अज्ञः सुखमाराध्यः सुखतरमाराध्यते विशेषज्ञः ।
ज्ञानलवदुर्विदग्धं ब्रह्मापि तं नरं न रञ्जयति ॥

Easily shalt thou the ignorant appease;
The wise more easily is satisfied;
But one who builds his raw and foolish pride
On a little lore not God Himself can please.

(2)

त्वमेव चातकाधार इति केषाञ्च गोचरः ।
विम्वोदर तस्यापि कार्पण्योक्तिं प्रतीक्षसे ॥

You opulent clouds that in high heavens ride,
Is't fame you seek? but surely all men know
To you the darting rainlarks homage owe.
Hold you then back your showers, because your pride
By our low suings must be gratified?

Here there is free paraphrase to clarify the meaning.

लभेत सिकतासु तैलमपि यत्नतः पीडयन्
पिबेच्च मृगतृष्णिकासु सलिलं पिपासादितः ।
कदाचिदपि पर्यटन् शशविषाणमासादयेत्
न तु प्रतिनिविष्टमूर्खजनचित्तमारावयेत् ॥

Nay, thou wilt find sweet oil in the sea-sands,
Press them but firmly in thy strenuous hands:
The desert-born mirage shall slake thy thirst,
Or wandering through the earth thou shalt be first
To find the horns of hares, who thinkst to school
With reason the prejudgments of the fool.

In this the poet has secured literalness without any sacrifice of grace.

कुसुमस्तवकस्येव द्वयी वृत्तिर्मनस्विनः ।
मूर्ध्नि वा सर्वलोकस्य शीर्यते वन एव वा ॥

To this verse the translator has given the title, Aut Caesar aut Nullus;

Two fates alone strong haughty minds endure,
Of worth convinced;—on the world's forehead proud
Singly to bloom exalted o'er the crowd,
Or wither in the wilderness obscure.

Apart from Bhartrihari, Aurobindo has translated also Kalidasa's "Vikramorvashiyam", under the title "The Hero and the Nymph". It appeared in 1911. It is entirely in blank verse. I may advert here for a moment and remark on the wonderful mastery which the poet has over this medium. Indeed, after Tennyson, the only other modern writer besides Aurobindo who has used it with equal skill is T.S.Eliot. Here are a few illustrations:

FROM THE HERO AND THE NYMPH

I am all weary and sad. Oh, let me rest
Beside this mountain river for a moment
And woo the breeze that dances on the waves.
All turbid is this stream with violent rain,
And yet I thrill to see it. For, O, it seems
Just like my angry darling when she went
Frowning—as this does with its little waves,—
A wrathful music in her girdle—and see!
This string of birds with frightened clangour rise;
She trailed her raiment as the river its foam,
For it loosened with her passion as she moved
With devious feet, all angry, blind with tears,
And often stopped to brood upon her wrongs:
But soon indignantly her stormy speed
Resumed, tripping, winding goes the stream,
As she did."

This, in a different vein, energetic and vividly descriptive, from

BAJI PRABHOU

"At once—
The muskets clamoured out, the bullets sped,
Deadly though few; again and yet again,
And some of the impetuous faltered back
And some in wrath pressed on; and while they swayed
Poised between flight and onset, blast on blast

The volleyed death invisible hailed in
Upon uncertain ranks."

Two passages from *Urvashie* are Miltonic, first in the melody imparted by proper names, and next in the use of the Homeric simile:

"So danced they numberless as dew-drops gleam,
Menaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,
Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,
Lolita, Lavonya, and Tilottama—
Many delightful names; among them she."

"As when a man to the grey face of dawn
Awaking from an unremembered dream,
Rapines at life awhile and buffets back
The wave of old familiar thoughts, and hating
His usual happiness and usual cares
Strives to recall a dream's felicity;—
Long strives in vain and rolls his painful thought
Through many alien ways, when sudden comes
A flash, another, and the vision burns
Like lightning in the brain, so leaped that name
Into the musing of the troubled king."

I have not referred to his "Savitri"—his magnum opus, described by the poet as "a legend and a symbol". In the words of Sri R. R. Diwakar, "it contains more than mere logical language addressed to the intellect; we are face to face with a mighty soul that has coined its experiences into words of magic, and thrown them into the currency of the emotional world. Words and sounds on this plane are as winged angels, which carry us aloft and give us glimpses of the very secret of things." Nor have I dealt with his essay on the Quantitative Metre and the reason of past failures. The poet admits that the attempt to introduce quantitative metres into English has failed and that it was predestined to failure, as it is something alien to the rhythm of the language. He arrives at the conclusion, however; "If the difficulty of the hexameter can be successfully overcome, no insuperable impossibility need be met in the naturalisation of other classical metres, for the harmonic principle will be the same....It would be a mistake to cling to rigid scholarly

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correction in the process; these metres must submit to the natural law of English poetry, to movements and liberties which the classical rules do not admit, to modulation, to slight facilitating changes of form, to the creation of difficult models of itself, as there are different models of the sonnet”.

A critic, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, says: "It cannot be said that Aurobindo shows any organic adaptation to music and melody. His thought is profound; his technical devices are commendable, but the music that enchants or disturbs is not there." Two small lyrics are an adequate answer to this criticism:

REVELATION

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes,—
Just a cheek of frightened rose
That with a sudden beauty glows,

Just a footstep like the wind
And a hurried glance behind,
And then nothing,—as a thought
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
Someone of the heavenly rout
From behind the veil ran out.

THE LITTLE MORE

One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.
Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God."

AMARANATHA JHA

THE MARUTS IN THE VEDA

WE have seen, in our previous study¹, that in their psychological aspect, the Maruts are the aspiring forces in man, powers that are born of life and attain to the light of the purer mind. Combining in themselves the swiftnesses characteristic of Vayu, the God of the Life-plane and the strength and force of Rudra who is their sire, it is the Maruts who give the necessary nerve-strengths, speed and drive to the inner being of the Vedic mystic in the ascent of his Yajna, Sacrifice, to the Goal of Immortality. As children of Aditi, the Infinite Consciousness extended in the etheric spaces, they are primarily the gods of the mid-region, *antarikṣa* the world of life; but they arrive at their full stature only when they reach the heights of the mind proper and impart their energisms to the thought-movements seeking greater heights. They are always on the move in companies and are referred in sevens or multiples of seven, corresponding to the seven Planes in the hierarchy of Creation based on the seven Principles of Existence.

The Maruts are worthy of their birth.

*Stable, indeed, is their birth-place; the birds are able to issue from their mother; for their strength everywhere is twofold.*²

The strength of the Maruts, says the seer, is not confined to one region. It is spread everywhere. It is twofold, the power of knowledge and the power of action.³ The Maruts possess these two elements of knowledge and activity because of the very nature of their origin of birth. Though their mother, Prishni, is the source and field for the variegated play of the Life-force, she contains also in her womb the multitude of thought-powers; such is the greatness of their origin; it is *dhruva*, solid and firm, excellent.⁴ The

¹ *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual* No. X

² स्थिरम् हि जानमेवां वयो मातुर्निरेतवे । यत् सीमन्तु द्विता शवः ॥ (RV. I. 37.9)

Unless otherwise mentioned, all English renderings of Riks in this Paper are adapted from the available translations by Griffith, Max Muller, Wilson etc.

³ प्रज्ञाबलं बाहुबलं च (Raghavendraswami: *Mantrārthamanjari*)

⁴ स्थिरत्वेन उत्तमतां लक्षयति (*ibid*)

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birds are the thought-powers. In the Veda we find many instances where these powers of thought are described as birds;¹ and birds here symbolise “energies...liberated and upsoaring, winging upward towards the heights of our being, winging widely with a free light, no longer involved in the ordinary limited movement” (Sri Aurobindo). They are so much instinct with the strength of their supporting life-energy that they are able to soar straight the moment they are born. Thus do the Maruts carry with them the double characteristic of their fount of origin—consciousness as force and consciousness as knowledge.

The same truth is emphasised by another Rishi.

*Here, here, ye of self-grown strength, seers with skin of Sun's splendour,
O Maruts, I dedicate to you this sacrifice.*²

The strength of the Maruts is their own, they do not derive their sustenance from outside. Their very substance is of strength, the force of life which in its native character knows no diminution. Its nature is to expand, to grow. And they are not merely of this self-growing strength. They are *kavayah*, seers, *krānta darśinah*, says Sayana; they who see what is *beyond*; they are endowed with the knowledge-vision that transcends the senses; not only that, their very skin is of the light, the splendour of the Sun who stands, in the Veda, for the Supreme Truth and Knowledge. The Rays of this Sun of Truth, the spreadings of the Knowledge constitute the stuff of their natural covering. To such, says the Rishi, to such embodiments of Force and Knowledge, he dedicates the sacrifice of his life-endeavour, *here, here, here* now on earth.

“The Rishi says: ‘Oh you Maruts, you gods are *svatavasah*, grown of your own strength, *kavayah*, seers, *surya-tvacah*, the splendour of the Sun itself is your covering and protective skin; to you, such as these, I dedicate today the sacrifice.’ Now how could these seers—those who look beyond the past and the present and as such endowed with consciousness, be mere natural phenomenon of storms, entities without consciousness?” (Sri Kapali Sastry)³

There is a constant emphasis on their quality of strength. Deriving as

¹ E.g. I. 88.1, I. 87.2, VII. 56.3. (Rig Veda)

² इहेह वः स्वतवसः कवयः सूर्यत्वचः । यजं मरुत आ वृणे ॥ (RV. VII. 59.11)
Translation by Sri Kapali Sastry.

³ *Rig Veda Bhashya* p. 69

THE MARUTS IN THE VEDA

they do from the plane of Life which is the reservoir of all dynamic energies the Maruts are filled with strength as a matter of course.

*O ye of unfailing strength, make That manifest; strike the fiend with your lustrous might.*¹

The Maruts, the seer declares, have a strength which never fails to effectuate itself: it is true strength. It is lustrous like everything else that concerns the Maruts. He appeals to them to strike down the enemy, the evil ones who oppose, and thus clear the way. Way for what? To manifest *That*, to bring into play the Great Light of which the subsequent Rik speaks,² the Light which is the source of all Knowledge and Truth-Power.

Or again,

Bounteous givers, whole strength have ye; shakers (of earth), perfect in your blazing might.

*Maruts, against the wrathful enemy of the seers, let loose an enemy like a dart.*³

Their strength is whole; it is not lacking in completeness. Limitation of any kind does not mar it. It is because of this fullness of strength that they are able to give fully, bounteously. The throb of their force shakes every thing around: the earth, i.e. the body of the worshipper trembles at the impact of their vibrant power. Their might which is brilliant with the glow of the informing Light is perfect in its sweep. To such exemplars of Strength and Might, the Rishi prays for action against the enemies of the seers, the forces of darkness and ignorance who are up in arms in anger against the worshipper,—mark the significant word *ṛṣi*, one who sights the liberating word—who is finding the means to free himself from their hold. He prays to the Maruts to let loose against them something of their enormous strength which is sure to strike and be effective as a pointed missile against an adversary.

If the Maruts are known for their unparalleled strength, they are no less distinguished for their wisdom. The hymns in the Rig Veda repeat again

¹ यूयं तत् सत्यशवस आविष्कर्त॑ महित्वना । विध्यता विद्युता रक्षः ॥ (RV. I. 86.9)

² *Vide* next instalment of the article

³ असाम्योजो विभृथा सुदानवोऽसामि धृतयः शवः ।

ऋषिद्विषे मरुतः परिमन्यव इषुं न सृजत द्विषम् ॥ (RV. I. 39.10)

and again that these gods are *kavayah*, seers, their activities are governed by a lofty knowledge which is specially theirs. Here for instance is a Rik of Nodhas:

Grant us, O ye Maruts, wealth, durable, rich in prowess and speeding the fleeing foe. A hundred, yea, thousandfold, ever increasing!

*May the host of the Maruts, Thought-wealthy, come soon and anon.*¹

The Maruts are *dhiyāvasu*, an epithet the Rishi uses in more than one Rik. Their wealth lies in their Thought. No doubt they are born of the substance of life and are primarily life-powers. Still, as Sri Aurobindo says, they are effective on the mental, the thought-plane. They begin their characteristic action when they grow and move on the heights of the mind, acquire the birth-right of the Thought-land, themselves filling the region with their innate dynamis. This Thought, the characteristic movement or expression of the Consciousness that is at work as Intelligence on this level in creation is brought into manifestation and fuller play by the Maruts; it is their wealth that the seer describes in significant adjectives which cannot apply to ordinary material wealth. It is durable; it is not fleeting and exhaustible. The substance of Thought rooted at its secret base in a principle of Infinite Knowledge exceeds the limitations of finite Space and Time. It has a dynamic power, charged with the impetuosity of the life-energies that have risen and joined to it. This element of force, apart from the Power which is inalienable from all true Thought, enables it to drive away the enemy, the darkness and ignorance vanishing with the dawn of Knowledge. It is hundred, thousandfold i.e. it is varied, complete, not wanting in wholeness.² Even full, it does not stop content with its fullness; that is the feature of things in the lower creation of *tamas* and inertia. From fullness it pours into a greater fullness; the heights of the mental summits have no end; they go on expanding and ever expanding.³ Such is the wealth for which the Maruts are known and of them the seer beseeches an early call at the altar of his soul.

¹ नू ण्डिरं मरुतो वीरवन्मृतीषांह रयिमस्मासु धत्त ।

सहस्रिणं शतिनं शूशुवांसं प्रातर्मक्षू वियावसुर्जगम्यात् ॥ (RV. I. 64.15)

² रायः . . . न यो युच्छति . . . सहस्रिणं । wealth in thousands which never vanishes (RV. V. 54.13)

³ अस्या धियः प्राविता (The host of Maruts) increaser of our intellect (RV. I. 87.4)

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Or to take another Rik:

*They carry with them the sweetness (of Ananda) as their eternal offspring, and play out their play brilliant in the activities of knowledge.*¹

With the harmony attained between the swell of life-energy and the poise of the purified mental Thought open to Knowledge—which is what the awakening and play of the Maruts mean in the seeker—there is a natural outflow of happiness, a streaming of sweet joy which always accompanies the manifestation of the Maruts; they are *mayobhuvah* giving birth to Delight. But they do not rest tranquil in the enjoyment of this ananda. They are essentially powers of movement, *yayiyah*,² powers that seek and embody, seek yet more and manifest. Theirs is the play of the winning and the giving of the treasures of Knowledge, of Light, which are massed on the heights of the Divine Mind.³ They win the illuminations of higher Knowledge and make them effective and active in the person of the sacrificer.⁴ In the words of Sri Aurobindo: The Maruts “are energies which make for knowledge. Theirs is not the settled truth, the diffused light, but the movement, the search, the lightning flash, and, when Truth is found, the many-sided play of its separate illuminations.”

The might of the Maruts is irresistible because it is of another nature than that of the human kind.

*Passing glorious must be your warrior might, not the guileful strength of the mortal.*⁵

The prowess of man, however great it could be, is after all rooted in ignorance, in limited and even malformed knowledge that is falsehood; as long as he lives under their rule his actions continue to be coloured with that infirmity of nature. The might of the Maruts, the seer says, is not of that nature; it is free from the falsity of appearances, it has the nobility of

¹ नित्यं न सूनं मधु बिभ्रत उप क्रीळन्ति क्रीळा विदथेबु घृष्वयः । (RV. I. 166.2)

Tr. Sri Aurobindo

² RV. X. 78.7

³ ददाशुषे दिवः कोशम् चुच्यवुः they have cast the Heaven's treasury down for the worshipper's behoof. (RV. V.53.6.)

⁴ विदयेबु धीराः 'wise thinkers in the discoveries of knowledge' (RV. III. 26.1)

⁵ युष्माकमस्तु तविषी पनीयसी मा मर्त्यस्य मायिनः । (RV. I. 39.2)

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warrior-make, it has a directness derived from its source in Truth,¹ and is hence supremely adorable, *atīṣayena stotavyam* (Sayana), unlike the tainted human kind. These purified life-powers and thought-powers are not subject to the limiting and twisting holds of Maya that so much characterise the formations on the physical plane. Theirs is the course of a large freedom moving towards the Law of the Truth.

Maruts, bright yourselves, bright are the offerings; to you the bright, I offer the bright sacrifice.

*By Law they came to Truth, the observers of Law, of happy birth, bright, purifiers.*²

The Maruts are bright, gleaming in their purity of form, and the offerings of the worshipper to be acceptable to them have to be of appropriate purity; they must be full of the light of the higher consciousness attained by the offerer, bright. The bright gods presiding over the purified and purifying energies on the life and the mental levels of the seeker will accept only the sacrifice that is aglow with the fire of aspiration. They arrive at the Truth, the Truth that is at the head of things, the Truth of themselves and the Truth of what is beyond them, by the *ṛtam*, the Law, the Right, the Way of the Truth-working. They are the observers of the Law; they move effortlessly on the Path of the Right and fail not to arrive at the Goal of the Truth. One who delivers himself into their hands is speeded up on this Path; happy is the moment when they are born in man,³ for then it is possible for him to entrust his sacrifice to the charge of these toiling divinities who purify under the stress of their surging movement and brighten with their own lustre of knowledge and power the inner being of the Yajamana set for the upward climb.

The same characteristics of the Maruts find expression in the utterance of another Rishi:

Ho, Maruts, Heroes, be gracious unto us, rich in treasures, immortal, knowers of the Law,

¹ अरेपसः ऋतजाताः (RV. V. 61.14)

² शुची वो हव्या मरुतः शुचीनां शुचिं हिनोम्यध्वरं शुचिभ्यः ।

ऋतेन सत्यमृतसाप आयञ्छुचिजन्मानः शुचयः पावकाः ॥ (RV. VII. 56.12)

³ भद्रजानयः whose births make for happy good (RV. V. 61.4)

THE MARUTS IN THE VEDA

*Ye hearers of the Truth, seers, youthful, of mighty speech, grown mighty.*¹

The Maruts are spoken of in their many-sided opulence. They abound in treasures, their own wealth of kine and horses, of knowledge and power; they hold in themselves the truth of immortality into which it is open to their worshipper to grow. They are *knowers*, they know the Divine Law which governs All. They are *satyaśrutah*, they who *hear* the Truth, who are open to the divine audition, the inspirations of Truth. They are also *seers*, the Wise ones that see with the eye of knowledge² through the barriers of Time and Space; they are full of youth, getting their sustenance from the ever-fresh fount of the waters of life-energies. Their speech, their voice is powerful, it cannot be kept back,³ their echoing utterances are mighty of result.⁴ Full of their varied plenitude they grow ever and ever mightier for the benefit of the supplicant who waits upon their pleasure.

The weapons of the Maruts, the means wherewith they destroy and build are as varied as they are spectacular. Their speech itself is a force of consequence.

Sing glory to the host of Maruts, brilliant, leaning to our praises, they of the flaming Word;

*May they be exalted here in us.*⁵

Theirs is the *Word* which signifies a concentrated expression of spiritual force in a sound-body. The voice of the Maruts is loaded with the power of the flaming Word, they are the singers of the Word, *brahmāno marutah*, which breaks into the strongholds of the elements that oppose the onward progress of man and shatters their ramparts of blindness and obscurity. These Gods of the purified life and mind energies, not only break down the evil by the force of their speech but also affirm and help to establish the Truth in the being of the seeker by its power; the being of the Yajamana

¹ ह्ये नरो मरुतो मूळता नस्तुवीमवासो अमृतो ऋतज्ञाः ।

सत्यश्रुतः कवयो युवानो बृहद्गिरयो बृहदुक्षमाणाः ॥ (RV. V. 58.8)

² सूरचक्षसः (Yajurveda 25.20)

³ न यो वराय मरुतामिव स्वनः (RV. I. 143.4)

⁴ *Brhad-girayah* has been also translated as dwelling on lofty mountains. These Powers attain to their full status and acquire individuation on the higher altitudes—the summits of the Mind—of the Hill of being; they are their natural habitat.

⁵ वन्दस्व मारुतं गणं त्वेषं पनस्युर्मणिणम् । अस्मे वृद्धा असन्निह ॥ (RV. I. 38.15)

has to learn to put itself in tune with the music of these leaders of the journey if it would be wafted along in their brilliant course. "The shining host has arisen in my soul, the host of the Thought-gods and they sing a hymn as they march upward, a hymn of the heart's illumination. March thou on. O my soul, impetuously to their violent and mighty music. For they are drunk with the joy of an inspiration...their thunders are the chant of the hymn of the gods and the proclamations of the Truth." (Sri Aurobindo).

The Maruts of the illumined Word, says the seer, are avid of worship. They look for the heart's adoration and its expression in speech from the worshipper because that is the one sure means whereby they can enter into communication and grow in his person with all the untold beneficence that goes with them. By that they will be exalted, their sway will increase in us, the Rishi says, here itself, *iha*, in the sacrifice which is in progress.

By the *word*, by their chants of power, the Maruts invoke the still higher godheads and their gifts upon the Sacrifice, upon the worshipper in whom they have been awakened into activity.

*Who are brave, unsurpassed in strength, who laud in worship, O Agni, with them, the Maruts come.*¹

The Rishi calls upon Agni, the Seer-Will, to come to the sacrifice along with the Maruts who chant the Rik, celebrate the worship. Sayana would have it that *arka* is water;² Skandaswamin that it is Indra. In either case, as Sri Kapali Sastry points out, the fact remains that the *word* of the Maruts is a fulfilling agent in the inner sacrifice of the Yajamana.³ "Brothers of Indra, the brave Maruts are able to raise the word (of the Yajamana) to a high intensity of power, to reach to Indra the showerer of all wealth, or, to impel the currents of the Divine Powers symbolised by the *Waters*."⁴

*Creators of speech, they spread out wide the Waters in their courses; they urge the lowing kine to enter (the Waters) up to their knees.*⁵

¹ य उग्रा अर्कमानृचुरनाघृष्टास ओजसा । मरुद्भिरग्न आ गहि ॥ (RV. I. 19.4)

² Vide Max Muller's Note: "Sayana explains *arka* by water....But *arka* has only received this meaning of water in the artificial system of interpretation first started by the authors of the Brahmanas, who had lost all knowledge of the natural sense of the ancient hymns."

³ Vide also RV. I. 52.15 where the Maruts are referred to as stirring Indra with their lauds when he is engaged in battle with the Enemy, Vritra the leading Force that obstructs.

⁴ *Rig Veda Bhashya* P. 219

⁵ उदुत्ये सूनवो गिरः काष्ठा अज्मेष्वत्नत । वाश्रा अभिज्ञु यातवे ॥ (RV. I. 37.10)

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The Maruts have set out on their courses. They are the impellers, the creators of speech with which they fill the regions of their movement. Their speech, says the seer, is the precursor, the actuating cause of a development which has a special significance to the seeker. These companions of Indra, the Lord of the worlds who has the bounty of rain in his giving, initiate the downpour and spread out the Waters. The Waters signify the currents of Consciousness-Force which irrigate and fertilise the fields of the being of the worshipper. His path is flooded with these streams of Waters and the lowing *cows*, the infant rays of light which are beginning to show themselves on the horizons of the highest attained levels of the seeker are urged by the Maruts with their impelling Words, to enter,—go in knee-deep and not stand out on the edge—into the Waters and drink and grow on their substance.¹

There are numerous passages in the Rig Veda extolling the part of the Maruts in bringing down to the Earth the Waters² from Indra's world of Svar. They join Indra in their troops, increase his striking force with their powerful voice and irresistible strength and aid him to fell down the Coverer, Vritra, and release the imprisoned Waters of Consciousness and Force to stream forth and rain on the arid soil of the worshipper's being.³ The Mystic looks to the Maruts to cause these Waters flow over not only those tracts of his existence which have been subjected to a continuous pressure of arduous discipline, *tapasya*, and prepared to fruitfully receive the showers from above, but also the other parts that remained unresponsive, too dry and lifeless to participate in the general progress.⁴ The streams which they pour down run in all directions, *viyadvartante enyah*,⁵ and the entire

¹ Western scholars have needlessly confounded themselves on this Rik. The construction and meaning given by Sayana is unusually straight. *Sūnavah* is to be taken, naturally, in the sense of impellers (*sū prerāṇe*); *vāca utpādakāḥ marutah*, as the scholiast says. Again, *kāṣṭha* is here water, not wooden poles or enclosures as taken by some. Sayana quotes Yaska in justification: *āpopi kāṣṭha ucyante krāntvā stithā bhavātīti* (Nirukta 2.15)

² यूयं वृष्टिं वर्षयथा पुरीषिणः Ye of Waters, pour the torrents down. (RV. V. 55.5)

Vide also सर्गा वर्षस्य वर्षतो वर्षन्तु पृथिवीमनु May the Waters shed by the Maruts flow to the Earth. (Atharva 4.15)

The Maruts themselves are द्रप्साः, पुरुद्रप्साः dripping, dripping profusely.

³ अनुधन्वनायन्ति वृष्टयः showers follow over desert spots (RV. V. 53.6).

⁴ *Vide* शर्धो . . . मास्तंतु विष्वगिरन्तस्वतीपूर्वरास्विष्टनिरार्तनास्विष्टनिः an army of Life-Powers moving with fertilising rain over our tilled and our waste lands. (RV. I. 127.6) Tr. Sri Aurobindo

⁵ RV. V. 53.7

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being of the Yajamana is bathed in these Waters of rejuvenation and illumination.

The *speech* of the Maruts, however, is not of the ordinary kind. It requires a special faculty to be able to listen to the movements of self-expression of these Powers. Not every one can do it.

*Wherever the Maruts pass, they fill the way with clamour. A rare one hears them.*¹

When the developing forces of the life and the thought-energies are on the move, their capacities for self-expression in terms and forms appropriate to their kind are put into play in the stress of their growing might and freedom; and only some, the rare, the seer observes, can hear their report and benefit by it. The faculty of inner audition should have been opened up and trained in the course of the self-discipline for one to be able to recognise and receive their speech.

It is pertinent to ask whether this Rik would make a meaning if the sole truth of the Maruts is what is given the naturalist interpretation. If the Maruts were nothing more than the storms and thunder in physical Nature, then why is it that *only some* can hear their words? Surely every one can hear the sound and fury of the elemental winds!

The Maruts are luminous not only in their own form, but in their weapons as well.

*Thou, O Agni, was the first Angiras, the seer and auspicious friend, a god of the gods, in the law of thy working the Maruts with their shining spears were born, seers who do the work by the knowledge.*²

The Angirasas are the divine Flame powers who have the specific function of aiding Indra, the Lord of the Divine Mind in recovering the lost Light from the dark caves of its captors. And Agni, the God who befriends the other Gods by carrying to them the offerings of man in Sacrifice and preparing the field here on earth for their manifestation, says the seer is the original Flame of whom the Angirasas are the off-shoots. He it is

¹ यद्ध यन्ति मरुतः सं ह ब्रुवतेऽध्वन्ना । शृणोति कच्चिदेषाम्॥ (RV. I. 37.13)

² त्वमग्ने प्रथमो अङ्गिरा ऋषिर्देवो देवानामभवः शिवः सखा ।

तव व्रते कवयो विद्यनापसोऽजायन्त मरुतो भ्राजदृष्टयः॥ (RV. I. 31.1) Tr.
Sri Aurobindo

who by the force of his Will and Knowledge—he is a seer, *ṛṣi*—makes it possible for Indra to appear, undertake and lead to a successful culmination the battle for the Light. And the Maruts, the awakened powers of subtle life and thought are brought into being in the wake of the functioning of Agni, the burning of the Flame of the Seer-Will. They are roused and released from the torpidity in which they are normally submerged, and set into action. They partake of both the elements, the light of knowledge and the force of action of Agni; hence it is his greatness, his glory that they blazon when they manifest.¹ Not only they, but their weapons also are bright, their spears luminous because they are activated by a common energism raised to a white-heat of self-transcending power. The purified force of life that constitutes the substance of their being is charged with the luminous glow of the governing knowledge, *vidmanā*, the knowledge with which these *seers* proceed to work. Hence their form, their robe, their weapons are all shining² and effective. “No half-lights, no impotent things are they, but mighty in aggression and puissant to attain. Spears of light they hold and they loose them from their hands at the children of Darkenss; the flashing lightnings of the Thought-gods search the night and the light of heaven rises of itself on our souls at their battle-call.” (Sri Aurobindo).

They move in chariots and these are drawn, significantly, by antelopes, the deer that fleet unmatched. This is how Rishi Kanva describes the legions of the Hosts:

*Who, with spotted deer, with weapons and revealing cries, are self-luminous.*³

Each of the Gods has his own characteristic vehicle, *vāhana*; and the deer, the antelope, are the recognised carriers of the Maruts. These swift-footed animals represent the rapidly moving forces, on the plane of life, who speed the gods on their mission. Speed is their main feature. We must not fail to note the other epithets also that are used, each with a significance of its own. Sri Kapali Sastry notes in his commentary:

¹ ब्रातंब्रातं गणं गणं सुशस्तिभिरग्नेः . . . गन्तारो यज्ञं

Host upon host, troop upon troop with their proclamings of the Fire...they come (RV, III. 26.6) Tr. Sri Aurobindo

² ये अञ्जिषु ये वाशीषु स्वभानवः स्रक्षु रक्मेषु । श्राया रथेषु धन्वसु ॥

They who shine self-luminous in decorations, in arms, in wreaths, in cuirass, in chariots in bows. (RV. V. 53.4)

³ ये पृषतीभिः ऋष्टिभिः अग्नि साकं वाशीभिरञ्जिभिः । अजायन्त स्वभानवः ॥ (RV. I. 37.2)

The antelopes celebrated for their storm-wind rush carry the host of the Maruts who are themselves born of the life-region and who endow their thought-movements with a divine velocity. The seeings, *ṛṣṭayah*, (*ṛṣater-darśanārthāt*) are weapons by reason of their piercing character. Of these Maruts of tempestuous speed, the very seeings become the weapons of aggression. Revealing, *anjibhih*, is to be taken in apposition with *vāsibhih*, words, cries. The words, the speeches arise out of the violent rush of the Maruts, break open and reveal to sight or illumine things that are deep-seated or concealed. Thus have the Maruts manifested themselves to the Rishi in Yajna, Sacrifice, with their *revealing cries* and full of the rays of the Light of Consciousness appropriate to their nature.¹

To take another Rik describing the antelopes of the Maruts.

*Ye to your chariot have yoked the spotted deer close; the red one between them draws.*²

Here we must note the drawers of the carriage are mentioned as three in number, obviously to correspond to the three principles or levels of the being of man viz. the body, the life and the mind. These Powers of upward movement, the Maruts, need the support of the energies of all the three parts of the being to proceed on their eventful journey. Of these three, says the Rishi, the middle one, the one in red hue takes the lead and thrusts forward; there can be no mistaking that this *rohita*, the *red* antelope, signifies a figure of the life-force embodying the power of action and enjoyment. It is this *vāhana* of life-energy laden with a special stress of the force of effectuation and joy that plays a preeminent role in speeding the car of the Maruts, with its compeers of the other two planes on either side to aid it.³

Thus equipped the Maruts arrive in their phalanx.

Like Agni with flashing splendour, gold-breasted, like tempest-blasts, self-moving, swift to lend their aid;

*As best of all foreknowers, excellent to guide, like Somas, delight-giving⁴ to him who follows the Law.*⁵

¹ *Rig Veda Bhashya* p. 376

² उपो रथेषु पृषतीर्युग्ध्वं प्रष्टिर्वहति रोहितः । (RV. I. 39.6)

³ Vide *Rig Veda Bhashya* p. 393

⁴ Or, good to guard

⁵ अग्निर्न ये भ्राजसा रुक्मवक्षसो वातासो न स्वयुजः सद्य ऊतयः ।

प्रज्ञातारो न ज्येष्ठः । सूनीतयः सुशर्माणो न सोमा ऋतं यते ॥ (RV. X. 78.2)

Note the epithets signifying their brilliance of form, their protective armour of gold¹, their spontaneities and swiftnesses, their vision and their knowledge and their outpourings of joy. Note also that their benevolence is only for those who go by the Rita, the Law of Truth.

(To continue)

M. P. PANDIT

This is that might of thee, O Indra, which doers of the action speak of in their Words. They praise and guard thy energy dripping with light; the people of the city come (reach) to thee by their thinkings.

They by their good action come (reach) to Indra and have his guard, they in whose wine-offerings thou hast delight: even as I approach thee empty of delight, even as I come to thee in my leanness, so in us take thy delight, O Indra.

(Rig Veda)

Tr. Sri Aurobindo

¹“Gold is the concrete symbol of the higher light, the god of the Truth” (Sri Aurobindo). The Maruts are also described as gold-helmeted, *hiraṇya-śiprāḥ*; tiaras wrought of gold are laid upon their heads, *śiprāḥ śirṣasū vitatā hiraṇyayih* (RV. V. 54.11). That is, their summits are enveloped in the light of Truth.

THE LIFE DIVINE

(A SYNOPSIS)

THE DIVINE MAYA

CHAPTER XIII

JUST as the concentration of the seed holds in itself the potentiality of the whole organism, so the individual being is a concentrated centre of that Existence, Consciousness, Force and Delight of being which is intrinsically One.

All things have arisen from that Oneness; are that Oneness in their essence; and their goal is to manifest that Oneness in a multiplicity of individual formations. The aim of each individual therefore is to realise that perfection, that completeness, in harmony with the whole world-play.

We can conceive the world-play as a triple movement: first an involution and a self-absorption of conscious being into the density and infinite divisibility of substance; next an emergence of the self-imprisoned force into formal being, living being, thinking being; and finally a release of the formed thinking being into the free realisation of itself as the One and the Infinite at play in the world, and hence the recovery of the boundless existence-consciousness-bliss by the world.

This is the ancient truth of evolution in the universe; and by that truth are the modern findings illumined and widened.

The discovery of all things as Sachchidananda reveals the true Nature of Reality; but it does not explain the process or the Law by which Reality turns itself into phenomenon.

Seen from the point of view of Force alone (as in modern science) this Law seems to be one based on accidental or chance formation. But when we take into account the self-expression of Existence, and above all its self-perception in Conscious Being, there is revealed a guidance and a self-perceived aim.

This conception of a purposeful aim in Creation finds support in man's age-long belief in a Creator—a self-determining power in universal con-

sciousness to perceive a certain Truth in itself and to bring that Truth into cosmic manifestation.

The Creator perceived in the old Semitic revelations was known to the Vedic seers by the name of Maya. This name was a symbolical representation (in old Sanscrit) of a power that measures, delimits or forms. By the action of Maya phenomenal being emerges out of the Supreme Being.

The original Vedic symbolism indicated that there is a higher Maya—supramental—and a lower Maya that presides over the present mental nature. This important distinction was missed by the later, illusionist philosophers who regarded the lower Maya as the Creatrix of the world, and hence as the agent of unreality.

The view now presented is that the universe originates not in a universal Mind, but in a supramental Truth-consciousness beyond Mind.

For man, the mental being, the Truth-consciousness is the real mediator between the supreme Reality (or Absolute) and the phenomenal reality of the world. We thus realise that Mind is an instrument of the higher Truth-consciousness; that Mind serves a practical function; and that it is not the power which knows and guides the truth of universal existence.

The Truth-consciousness then is not an infinite Mind constituted in terms of mentality as we know it, but the seat of Divine Knowledge and the possessor of the Divine Will.

Mind is a limited instrument. Normally it sees phenomena from moment to moment; and these momentary views are but fragments of Time and Space. Extending its range it can conjecture on what is to be, but not with any certainty or exactitude.

Nihilism and Illusionism are the inevitable end-products of a knowledge based on Mind as the highest cosmic force. It is only when we see a Law and Knowledge beyond the mentality governed by appearances, that we realise that the world is a growing image of a divine Creation.

That is to say, only when we cease to reason and go deep into ourselves where the activity of mind is stilled, do we become aware of that other consciousness, and our eyes are opened to vast illimitable ranges of Knowledge to which Reason is but a messenger.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPERMIND AS CREATOR

The intermediary Power between the Supreme One and the created Many

is a principle of active Will and Knowledge superior to mind, and is the true Creatrix of the worlds.

The supreme ideal for our evolving human consciousness seeking self-perfection is to discover permanently and make living that final harmony and truth. But there appears to be an impassable barrier, an apparent contradiction, between human mentality and the divine Supermind.

We have to realise that Supermind is the Creatrix of the world, and of Mind also. Therefore, however contrary Mind may have become, it must contain in essence the identical stuff of Supermind.

First let us see clearly what Supermind means; for it is a new word, though not a new conception. The cryptic verses of the Veda refer to Supermind as a vastness beyond the ordinary firmaments of our consciousness. It is a vast comprehensiveness, a luminous truth and harmony of being. Even the Gods are subsidiary powers of this supreme Truth-consciousness.

One important characteristic for the mind to grasp is that in Supermind there is no separation between the light of Knowledge and the force of Will. Also here are various channels by which the truths of Supermind come to us; one is through revelation (or seeing), and another is through inspiration (or hearing).

It has been discovered that our own division of knowledge into a subjective knowledge by identity, and an objective cognition by detachment, corresponds to a double function in Supermind; that of a comprehending Consciousness on the one hand, and an apprehending Consciousness on the other.

Thus Supermind, as the intermediary link between the Unity of Sachchidananda above and the dividing consciousness of Mind below, has both the all-comprehending power of consciousness of the former together with the detailed apprehending function of knowledge of the latter.

Supermind is the link that holds the two opposites—the immutable One above and the ever-changing Many below; and it is thus the beginning and end of all Creation.

Mind can only become complete by joining itself with Supermind. If it overpasses Supermind it arrives at the Transcendent Consciousness where the world appears as a Nothingness; if it ignores Supermind it remains entrammelled in its separative and divided view of the world, and ends up with an interminable Plurality.

Mind is a passage and not a culmination; and Supermind is the link which reconciles our experience of the indivisible Unity beyond, with our

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fragmented mental experience here below. We can thus perceive the significant relation of Supermind to man more clearly.

Beyond Time is the original self-concentration, the indivisible One; while in apparent contradiction to that Supreme Unity is Mind's conception of the universe,—an apparent disintegration of that Unity. Joining these two is the intermediary divine Power of Supermind which upholds the apparent disintegration and maintains a harmony, a cosmos, where mind sees only chaos and disharmony.

We can now see the working of Supermind more clearly. Supermind creates but does not divide. Evolution has a corresponding action in Involution, by which Unity is contained within as the latent potentiality of all things. Thus we discover that the All is in each, as well as each in the All.

One Will, a Knowledge-Force of Conscious-Being, maintains the multifarious possibilities of cosmos in a unified law of process and aim. Such law we see in the process of Nature. Nature is but the executive instrument; behind is the Idea (the Real-Idea) which belongs to the Truth-consciousness.

Idea, as the attribute of Supermind, is not something abstract or detached from reality as is characteristic of mind, but is itself reality. In Supermind there is no separation of reality from thought or idea. The Idea and the creative process are one.

The creative movement of Supermind has three effects: Being which results in substance; Consciousness which comes forth in knowledge; and Will that is directed into force. Thus the Idea in Supermind is inseparable from the instigating Will, and also inseparable from the resultant substance. The creative Power is hence termed the Real-Idea.

Supermind is supremely the creator of harmony—a harmony within and between all things—which reveals it ultimately as the infallible and omniscient creative principle of God's Will.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

Supermind embodies the truth of the religious conception of God—the Lord and Creator of the world. This is not the anthropomorphic conception, which is but a magnified Man, a projection of the ego, but the conception of a Conscious-Being.

The Divine is both Personal and Impersonal, but it is the impersona

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and not the psychological truth of the divine Consciousness that we are at present seeking to fathom.

The whole harmony of Cosmos depends on the fact that the Truth-consciousness is everywhere an ordering self-knowledge. It is the pre-determining Idea in the very seed of things without which the evolution of the world as an inter-related harmony, would not be possible.

From the beginning the whole development of Creation is predetermined according to the original inherent Truth; and by it the world unfolds. This unfolding gives rise to succession of Time, and relation in Space.

But where Mind ordinarily views Time as a succession from past to future, and Space as an extension measured out by divisibility of substance, the conception above Mind sees Time and Space as the one Conscious-Being viewing itself in extension, subjectively as Time, objectively as Space. It is possible for Mind to go beyond its ordinary conception and realise Time and Space as two inter-related aspects of the universal force of Consciousness. In a world of change and intershock of forces Time and Space are realities inseparable from each other.

As conceived by Supermind, all is a progressive harmony into which Supermind has entered and which it wholly embraces. Thus each thing in Nature, animate or inanimate, is governed by an indwelling Vision and Power, obeying subconsciously or half-consciously the real-idea of the divine Supermind within it.

The Knowledge that belongs to Supermind is a Knowledge of complete Unity and Wholeness. Mental intelligence can only follow step by step the working of this higher knowledge; Supermind comprehends all things because it is one with all.

The action of mentality separates the knower from the known and produces an artificial knowledge. Only when the knower possesses that which it seeks to know in a unity of consciousness, do we arrive at a union of the apprehending and comprehending consciousness. This is as yet alien to the present dividing activity of mind.

Mind's vision is based on an egocentric outlook which separates the reality of a subjective view from the vast objectivity that stands outside its narrow orbit.

We have to realise that just as Cosmos can only be explained by that which stands above Cosmos, so Creation can only be explained by the creative Power of Supermind that has entered into and embraces Creation. To enter into the consciousness of this all-comprehending Power, we have

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to completely lose the ordinary separative outlook, and see the triple aspects of Supermind as a single Truth. Only thus can we realise both the origin of mentality, and the meaning of this world of Mind, Life and Matter.

The source of this lower world of Mind, Life and Matter, which has been separated from the Perfection beyond, resides in a secondary power of Supermind. This is its projecting and apprehending Consciousness.

The creation of the phenomenal world may thus be seen as three steps. First, the division between the Lord or Creator and His force. Secondly the reproduction of this primary division throughout creation, resulting in the division between the soul-centres and Nature. Thirdly the soul itself becomes submerged, and the separative consciousness comes into being. This is the real beginning of the Ignorance, characterised by Mind's separation from the vast wideness of the Truth-consciousness.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRIPLE STATUS OF SUPERMIND

Before proceeding to the individual soul-vision of the world, let us resume what has been realised of the process of the Creator Himself, the Creation.

All existence is one Being, and its Nature is the interplay of Consciousness, Force and Delight. It is the eternal play, the Bliss of the Divine Consciousness; and the concentrated essence of this Bliss is our own real self, which has to be unveiled and released from the domination of the false ego, the centre of our present mentality.

In asserting these two opposite entities—the truth of the unity of the Divine Nature on the one hand, and the falseness or ignorance of the divided mentality on the other—we have to be cognisant of the reconciling link between them, in order that the ignorance may be transformed and not merely abolished.

This intermediary link is the Truth-consciousness or Supermind, which is the true Origin, the Divine Creator of mentality and the world. Supermind operates by the Divine Law—the Real-Idea—which carries with it the Conscious-Force of the Divine Nature.

Thus the Divine Conscious-Force (or Knowledge-Will) has entered into the essence of things; it is even in the midst of apparent Ignorance, though it is obscured by the latter.

Supermind is indeed the supreme creative instrument of the Divine

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Nature, while Mind is a subsidiary instrument of Supermind. Supermind is the Being of the Divine Consciousness in its creative aspect, what we call God, the Creator of Space and Time. Consciousness (Knowledge) and Force (Will) are the inseparable aspects of that divine Power.

Because our outlook is yet limited, partial and divided, we see disharmony where all is indeed one and a harmony. We have to regain the Oneness of the Divine Consciousness, which is founded on the triple status of its creative action.

The first and primary poise of Supermind is the all-embracing Oneness where there is yet no division. All things are, in this poise, manifestations and forms of oneness with Spirit.

In the second poise the Divine Consciousness stands back from the movement and projects an apprehending consciousness, which inhabits and distributes itself in its created forms. It would be the same everywhere in soul-essence, but varying in soul-form.

This is the individual Divine (distinct from the universal Divine). Here the individual Divine would envisage its existence as a soul-form and soul-existence of the One. By the comprehending action of consciousness it would enjoy its unity with the One and with all soul-forms. By the frontal apprehending action it would enjoy its individual movement and its relations of free difference both with the One and with all its forms.

A third poise of Supermind would make the individual play of relation with the universal its dominant experience; but the realisation of utter unity with them would not be lost. This tertiary poise is the basis out of which dualism and the separative existence spring.

We have to note also that there is no break in the soul's consciousness in its descent from the tertiary poise into the Ignorance where the Many becomes the real and dominant fact of experience. The spiritualised individual would thus see the differentiation of the world movement together with the stable unity as the lower and upper poles of the same truth.

There is no falsehood or illusion in any of these three poises of Supermind. At the most there is only a priority of consciousness, extending from the One to the Many and returning from the Many to the One.

Thus it is only the partiality of our mentality that sees the Creator or the Creation as an illusion; or that declares that an irreconcilable duality is the finality of existence.

N. PEARSON

THE HUMAN CYCLE

(AN ABRIDGEMENT)

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPRARATIONAL BEAUTY

REASON may be an insufficient help in dealing with religion but in other spheres of human consciousness and human activity it may act as a sovereign. But this too does not turn out in the end to be true. This is specially evident in the two realms of the ethical and aesthetic being in man. Starting from the infrarational parts of our being, the instinct and impulse for beauty begin with much imperfection and impurity. Here reason comes to distinguish, to enlighten, to correct. But it is only in a middle plane of our aesthetic seeking and activity that it operates. The creation of beauty in poetry and art does not fall within the sovereignty or even within the sphere of reason. Periods of artistic creation in which reason has ruled have achieved work of a certain greatness, but of intellectual greatness and perfection of technique rather than a supreme inspired and revealing beauty. It claimed for itself the name of classical art; but the claim is of doubtful validity. The discrimination which all artistic work must possess is not an intellectual self-criticism or an obedience to rules imposed from outside, but itself creative, intuitive, or part of the vision. In the appreciation of beauty it has a part, but it is not even there the supreme judge or law-giver. We see this in the history of the development of literary and artistic criticism. In the earliest stages appreciation is instinctive, natural, it does not attempt to give an account of itself to the thinking intelligence. When reason applies itself to the task it not only tries to record the nature of the response but to analyse, to find out a grammar of technique, a fixed code of Shastra. A time comes when the creator of beauty revolts against this. The conscious appreciation of beauty reaches its highest point when the action of the intuitive mind completes the action of the rational intelligence and when it has been sufficiently trained and developed can take up always the

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work of the intellect and do it much better. What has been said of great creative art applies to all beauty, beauty in Nature, beauty in life as well as beauty in art. We find in the end the place of reason and the limit of its achievement are precisely of the same kind in regard to beauty as in regard to religion. And for the same reason, for it is in truth seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUPRARATIONAL GOOD

Through our religious and aesthetic being we find the universality of a principle and a law, a truth on which the sages have always agreed. But in other spheres of life, what by an irony of ignorance we call especially practical life, we are less ready to acknowledge this. For even there we must arrive eventually at the highest truth—that all active being is a seeking for God, Reality, the Divine. It is in our ethical being that this becomes most readily apparent, in spite of the tinkering of reason as in the utilitarian, hedonistic or socialistic systems. Yet each of these systems has a truth behind their false constructions. Utility is a fundamental principle of existence, if one could only find the way and be always sure of what is the real good of all. And though pleasure may be a subconscious motive to the pursuit of virtue, the action of the ethical man is not motivated by even an inner pleasure, but by a call of his being, the necessity of an ideal, the figure of an absolute standard. In the recorded history of our ascent this does not at first appear clearly, does not appear perhaps at all: there the evolution [of man in society may seem to be the determining cause of his ethical evolution. But that this is not the core of the matter is shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard.

Our ethical impulses and activities begin like the rest in the infrarational and take their rise from the subconscious. Man obeys the law at first without any inquiry into the why and wherefore; later on the reason labours to make us understand what the impulses and instincts seek after, but in the end these ethical ideas and this intelligent will escape from its hold and soar up beyond its province. For the ethical being like the rest is a growth and seeking towards the absolute, the divine, which can only be attained securely in

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the suprarational. In fact ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in the action or the laboured effort to be blameless according to standards of the world, it is an attempt to grow into the divine nature. Such was the supreme aim of the ancient sages who had the wisdom which rational man and rational society have rejected because it was too high a truth for the comprehension of the reason and for the powers of the normal limited human will too bold and immense, too infinite an effort. It is with the cult of the Good, as with the cult of the Beautiful and the cult of the spiritual, the aim is man's rising from an infrarational through the reason to a supramental consummation.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SUPRARATIONAL ULTIMATE OF LIFE

IN all the higher powers of his life man may be said to be seeking for God. But all this seems something above our normal and usual being. For itself society is content to follow mainly after its own inherent principle of vital satisfaction, vital necessity and utility, efficiency. The reason is that here we get to another power, the life-power which, even if we recognise it as lower in the scale, still insists on its own reality and has not only the right to exist but the right to satisfy itself and be fulfilled. The modern European idea of society is founded upon this vital dynamism. This is the whole significance of the civilisation of the nineteenth century. Life in society consists, for the practical human instincts, in three activities, the domestic and social life of man, his economic activity as a producer, wealth-getter and consumer and his political status and action. The ancients held a different, indeed a diametrically opposite view. Although they recognised the immense importance of the primary activities, in Asia the social most, in Europe the political, yet they are man's first business, and not his chief business. The ancients regarded this life as an occasion for the development of the rational, the ethical, the aesthetic, the spiritual being. Greece and Rome laid stress on the first three alone, Asia went further. On this a great deal hangs; for if the practical and vitalistic view of life and society is the right one, then our idea that life is a seeking for God and for the highest self and that society too must make that its principle cannot stand. Therefore on this great primary thing we must look with care to see what it is in its reality as well as what it is in its appearance.

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The primary impulse of life is individualistic and makes family, social and national life a means for the greater satisfaction of the vital individual. In extreme cases the individual resorts to a primitive anti-social feeling but in modern times these cases grow rarer. In a collectivist society even the refuge of an inner seclusion may be taken away from us.

What account are the higher parts of man's being—his ethics and religion especially—to make with this vital instinct or with its gigantic modern developments? Should it be one of recoil, of almost complete hostility as it so often is? Up to a certain point this recoil has its uses, but it tends, if not to kill, to discourage the vital instincts and the energetic reaction to force and circumstance. Properly looked at the vital instinct has its rich elements, here too are high-reaching gods, masked but still resplendent. In modern times reason, not as philosophy but as science, has increasingly taken it up for perfection. These endeavours cannot be entirely successful if our theory of life is right, if life holds the imprisoned suprarational in it, then it must have the instinctive reaching out for something divine, absolute and infinite which is concealed in its blind strivings. The first mark of the suprarational is the growth of absolute ideals. The absolute vital ideals must be of that nature. Nowhere are they wanting. In the domestic, social, economic, even political life we find hints of these. Through the two powers of competition and co-operation they are stumbling forward towards some realisation of power and unity. For the Divine in life is Power possessed of self-mastery, but also of mastery of His world, and man and mankind move towards the conquest of their world and their environment. And again the Divine fulfilment here is and must be oneness, and the ideal of human unity however dim and far-off is coming slowly into sight.

To assist in this growth Life-Nature enforces on her human instrument ego-enlarging, ego-exceeding, even ego-destroying instincts and movements which combat and correct the smaller self-affirming instincts and movements. And though the structure arrived at by reason is always partial, precarious and temporary, the ideal and practical reason of man labours to find amidst all this the right law of life and action.

The process of life through a first obscure and confused effort of self-finding is the inevitable result of its beginnings in an apparent Inconscience; and yet we see that this unconscious Energy does at every step the works of a vast and minute Intelligence. This betrays the hidden truth and justifies the urge towards the pleasure, happiness, delight, divine bliss and

ecstasy inexplicably born out of an insensitive Nihil. But the Inconscient, if a mask, is an effective mask, of the Spirit; it imposes on the evolving life and soul the law of a difficult emergence, of fragmentation. Only when it rises and widens out of the ego, the limited separative consciousness into the oneness of the liberated spirit, can it escape from the results of its growth out of the Inconscient. Life cannot arrive at its secret ultimates by following its first infrarational motive forces of instinct and desire. But neither can human reason give it what it searches after. The ultimates of life are spiritual and only in the full light of the liberated self and spirit can it achieve them. There is then a suprarational ultimate of Life no less than a suprarational Truth, Good and Beauty. The endeavour to reach it is the spiritual meaning of this seeking and striving Life-Nature.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

With that opulent pleasure which is thine, O Indra most full of the plentitudes, awake in us as our companion of the delight for our growth, for the giving of the enjoyment, O slayer of the Coverer.

(*Rig Veda*)

Tr. Sri Aurobindo

REVIEW

The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, by *Dhirendra Mohan Datta*. Pub. The University of Wisconsin Press, 811 State Street, Madison. Wisconsin (U.S.A.) Pp. 154+ix, Price \$ 2.50

The title of the book gives rise to the question: Did Mahatma Gandhi have a philosophy of his own? Did he perceive any idea-truths in the manner of the Thinkers in the West? Or did he realise any of the verities of the soul and systematise them in the language of the intellect, as is the way of genuine philosophers in India? The author anticipates this natural query and answers: "Gandhi was not an originator of new ideas, nor could his ideas be regarded as constituting a system of philosophy in the academic sense of the term....He learned what he calls 'the eternal truths' from the greatest traditional religious and philosophical teachers of the world" (p. 21). And from what he learnt, he went on to select such of the precepts as appealed to his mind and heart and based his own life on the synthesis so formed. The author has undertaken to "find out the basic elements of that outlook, and present them under the usually accepted topics of philosophy, trying to set them into a coherent system, so far as possible." Himself a practised expositor of Philosophies, and what is more, with the sympathy and understanding born of his association with the leader in the most impressionable years of his life, it is no surprise that Dr. Datta has done full justice to his subject, or even more.

He first gives a rapid account of the environments in which Gandhiji's life was moulded and traces the important influences that went to form the main strands of his outlook on life viz. the traditions of the Vaishnava and the Jaina Faith which held—and still do—such powerful sway in the land of his birth and growth, Kathiawar (p. 9); Tolstoy and Ruskin by their new interpretation of Christianity (p. 13); Henry David Thoreau, the American social reformer (P. 14); and the study of the Gita. He then proceeds to arrange the ideas and thoughts of Gandhiji, spread all over his extensive writings and speeches, under the regular classifications of Philosophy: God, World, Man; Morals, Society, Politics, and rounds up the work with a

chief chapter on the dangers that face mankind today and the way in which it is best possible to meet and save the situation.

Dr. Datta observes that the crisis "has really originated from the many new moral problems caused by the too sudden developments of science, technology, and industrialised society, and the too sudden coming together of the different nations through rapid transportation. Humanity has not had enough time for moral adjustment to the overwhelming atmosphere of new truths about nature and mind, nor has it had time to handle with wise control the enormous physical powers achieved by technology. The present crisis is the danger signal that urgently calls for the development of moral powers commensurate with the physical and mental developments."

(p. 152). In pointing out that the solution of the problem is to be sought on a level other and higher than the economic, political or sociological, the author indeed hits the nail but misses its head when he diagnoses the malady to be of a *moral* character and prescribes the panacea of the ethicist. For, nature—human nature—presents a problem which is wider and whose roots are much deeper than those levels of our being where alone moral values and standards can legitimately obtain; and the solution to be effective has got to be correspondingly exhaustive and radical. The key lies not in the canons of Ethics but in the fulfilment of the deeper urges of the soul within. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"To develop the sattvic part of our nature, a nature of light, understanding, balance, harmony, sympathy, good-will, kindness, fellow-feeling, self-control, rightly ordered and harmonised action, is the best we can do in the aims of the mental formation, but it is a stage and not the goal of our growth as being. These are solutions by the way, necessary means for a partial dealing with this root difficulty; provisional standards and devices given us as a temporary help and guidance because the true and total solution is beyond our present capacity and can only come when we have sufficiently evolved to see it and make it our main endeavour.

The true solution can intervene only when by our spiritual growth we can become one self with all beings, know them as part of our self, deal with them as if they were our other selves; for then the division is healed, the law of separate self-affirmation leading by itself to affirmation against or at the expense of others is enlarged and liberated by adding to it the law of self-affirmation for others and our self-finding in their self-finding and self-realisation. It has been made a rule of religious ethics to act in a spirit of universal compassion, to love one's neighbour as oneself, to do to others

as one would have them do to us, to feel the joy and grief of others as one's own; but no man living in his ego is able truly and perfectly to do these things, he can only accept them as a demand of his mind, as an aspiration of his heart, an effort of his will to live by a high standard and modify by sincere endeavour his crude ego-nature. It is when others are known and felt intimately as oneself that this ideal can become a natural and spontaneous rule of our living and be realised in practice as in principle. To be ourselves liberated from ego and realise our true selves is the first necessity; all else can be achieved as a luminous result, a necessary consequence. That is one reason why a spiritual call must be accepted as imperative and take precedence over all other claims, intellectual, ethical, social, that belong to the domain of the Ignorance. For the mental law of good abides in that domain and can only modify and palliate; nothing can be a sufficient substitute for the spiritual change that can realise the true and integral good because through the spirit we come to the root of action and existence."¹

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¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Chapter XIV

